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BY THE EDITOR

• The Russians claimed, some time ago, to have invented *bezbol,* and that the great American pastime now enshrined at Cooperstown is only a variation of their original invention.

Be that as it may, they've certainly come up with the mightiest long-ball hitter of all time. One of their boys smacked *Sputnik I* so far out of the ballyard the fielders can go home to dinner; it won't be down this season.

On the day the news of the great scientific triumph broke here in New York, a certain newscaster came up with a variation of the old chestnut that's been used for years on such occasions. He told of a man who rushed into an air terminal and shouted: "They just launched a space satellite! I want to buy the first ticket on the first spaceship to Mars!"

This brings to mind what is probably the original version of the gag. It seems one cave man saw another cave man rushing past him and yelled, "Where you going?"

The first cave man yelled back, "Don't bother me. I'm in a hurry. I want to buy the first ticket on the *Super Chief* to Los Angeles."

The second cave man said, "What are you talking about? There's no such thing as a *Super Chief.*"

"Of course not," his friend replied. "But it won't be long now. Joe Glumpf just invented the wheel."

This comparison is a trifle pessimistic, however. The man who wants to go to Mars won't have nearly as long to wait as the cave man did.—PWF

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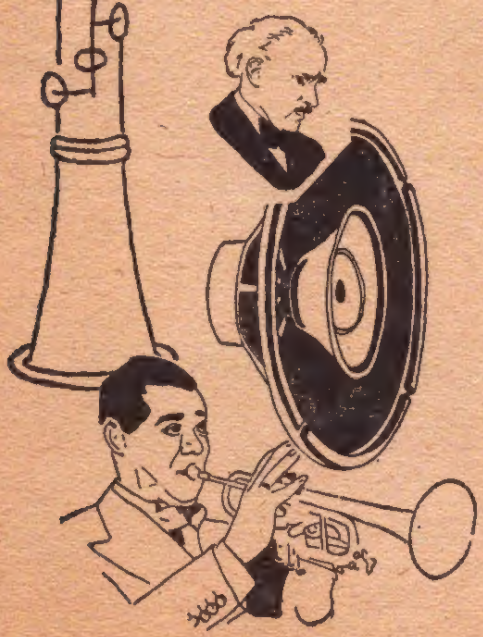

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A god or not, he was gripped by the

flaming rage of a devil.

RESURRECTION ON FIFTH AVENUE

By GORDON JAULYN

He came to them—this golden man—when their world seemed dead. They followed him because there was nothing else to do. But where would he lead them? To a higher heaven, or a deeper hell?

IT WAS high noon in Manhattan, and a flock of starving pigeons wheeled hopelessly in the air over the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-Second Street. Too hungry, now, to waddle sedately along the library steps where bread crumbs had always been found in the past, and too stupid to fly away into the countryside and leave the empty city behind. On a watertower, fifty storeys above the street, a hawk wheeled patiently. Soon it would plummet down upon the bewildered flock like Vengeance incarnate.

The hawk was not concerned with rows of automo-

biles pulled neatly into curbs and left abandoned. It was unaffected by empty streets where waves of red and green came clicking up the rows of traffic lights in a city where nothing moved. The hawk could not think far enough ahead, to a time when all the pigeons would be gone.

On Fifth Avenue, above Forty-Second Street, somebody was moving. He was seven and a half feet tall, bronzed muscular, and naked except for a length of cloth he had picked up and wrapped around his body. As he came barefoot down the middle of Fifth Avenue, following the green stripe that was still fresh from St. Patrick's day, he looked from side to side in bewilderment. He walked slowly, as though nothing he saw was familiar, and everything he saw was a little frightening.

He might conceivably have been a man, except that a golden nimbus outlined him. It glowed from his skin as though bright fires burned within him. It might have been a halo, or the mark of Hell's smouldering brimstone. Saint, or demon, or yet something else, no one will ever know exactly what he felt and thought, for even men are often misunderstood and, whatever he was, he was more than that. He came down Fifth Avenue, and the sight of him terrified the hawk. It cowered away into the sky, and back to her nest on the cliffs above the river. The pigeons, saved from death but all ignorant of that, were not so stupid as to expect crumbs from him. The flock burst apart in an explosion of wings, and he was left alone at the foot of the library steps, looking up at impassive stone lions . . .

There was a mural on the ceiling of the library's main reading room. It had withstood the years with poor success; great patches of it had gone to scale, with white plaster peeping out from behind the flaking paint. Looking up at it, Sam Winch could barely make out what it had all been supposed to represent in the days before Mrs. Astor's pile of marble had become the New York Public Library. It was a sprawling, confused scene full of allegorical figures as only an imported European artist could have portrayed them in the days when provincial America imported Culture in job lots.

Whatever it had been, it was mercifully gone to seed up there scores of feet above

the floor in a room better suited to being a railroad station than a quiet repository of culture.

The bent little man in the opposite chair looked at Sam owlishly over the tops of his glasses. Sam grinned at him, and the man bent his head quickly, pretended to scribble on the topmost of the stack of blank file cards at his elbow. He had a huge old volume of some kind open in front of him, and was poring over it, stopping to scribble now and then. As he felt Sam's grin on him, he flushed and wrote more rapidly.

Sam looked around. At every desk in the room, people were bent over their books and scribbled. Crawling around through the wormholes in the woodwork of the past, Sam Winch thought to himself.

Sam Winch was a big man, with thick shoulders and a flat belly. His knuckles were mashed down, his nose was bent a little, and there was a silvery scar on his head, visible through the crewcut. He wasn't a bad-looking man, and neither his education nor his mannerisms were coarse. But he was badly out of place here. He preferred living in the present exclusively. He knew enough about the past to form a shrewd guess that things today were pretty much as they had been for centuries, baring a few differences in dress, religious preferences, and technology. If that was so, then tomorrow probably would be no different. So, today was enough to cope with.

He was in the library because he was supposed to meet a man. The man hadn't shown up—was about a half hour late, as a matter of fact.

Sam Winch thought about a bar across the street. He thought about a cold beer, decided he wanted one, and stood up. The man had been going to offer him a proposition that might have netted Sam nearly a hundred thousand dollars. On the other hand, it might have netted him a pine box and a quick burial in a hot climate. You never knew, when you started messing with gun-running. Well, if the man was still serious tomorrow, they'd make the deal tomorrow.

Sam Winch left the reading room, went through the lobby, out the revolving door, and started down the steps.

The steps bore their usual traffic: people coming up toward the doors, other people going down. Sam Winch no-

ticed a young couple, neatly dressed, holding hands, she carrying one of those drum-shaped pieces of luggage they called hatboxes nowadays and which generally held anything but hats. They were oblivious to anything around them.

Well, yes, Sam Winch thought to himself, it's Friday. Weekend trips to the shore, or the mountains. They're very much in love. They get out of work at noon —maybe they simply talk their bosses out of it, or maybe they lie about a sick aunt— they meet on the library steps, and off they go, hand-in-hand. To the bus depot. The hatbox will get under everybody's feet; they'll have to take separate seats because it's crowded, and they'll try to talk to each other across the aisle. Not very successfully, most likely, because there'll be an aggressive eight-year-old on the seat behind her, and a fat woman with an uncertain digestion in the seat next to him. It'll be hot, and they'll get to their little love-nest exhausted. Tomorrow'll be all right, but Sunday they'll have to do it all in reverse, except now they'll both be sunburned and bug-bitten.

God! Sam Winch thought, I hope they love each other very much. I wonder if they're married?

There was, unexpectedly, a golden glow in the air directly in front of the young couple.

Glory be! Sam Winch thought, you don't suppose their passion's taking tangible form?

New York is a noisy city, and the intersection of 42nd and 5th on Friday may well be its noisiest part. Suddenly it was as quiet as the empty space between planets. There was a blur, and the cars were gone, shot over toward the curbs, parked, locked, their passengers evaporated. There was dust on the streets, unstirred by wheels, pock-marked by rains. The awning of the cigar store on the corner was suddenly loose, weatherbeaten, with a tear hanging raggedly. The color of the sky changed — clouds vanished, moved, shrank, writhed. Everything was changed except the people on the uptown side of the library steps, nearest the golden glow.

The glow surrounded a giant of a man, bigger than Sam Winch if much younger —awkward, somehow, with his youth—and he stood looking up at the people, surrounded by his blaze of glory.

The young girl of the couple sank to her knees and folded

her hands. The young man hesitated, and uncertainly followed suit. Another girl, behind them, did the same.

The two or three other people farther up the steps could not make up their minds what to do. They stood motionless, some of them with their knees obviously ready to bend.

Sam Winch took a deep breath, held it momentarily, let it out, patted the shoulder holster where the slim Italian automatic pistol lay snugly in its morocco sheath, and moved quickly down the steps toward the man. He had no idea of what was going on, but experience had taught him there were few troubles he was not equipped to push his way into, stir around, and solve.

He stopped far enough up the steps so that his eye level was above the golden man's. "What's the story?" he asked without sounding either aggressive or frightened.

The golden man shook his boyish head. "I—I don't know," he answered in a hesitant voice. "The birds flew away, and I was lonely."

Sam Winch took that statement for what it was worth, filed it, and looked around for more information.

The city was completely empty. Nothing moved in the streets as far as he could see, and there was no reason to believe that whatever had happened had stopped happening the moment it got out of sight. The silence was absolute. Nothing—absolutely nothing—was alive and moving in New York City except in this one place, in the immediate vicinity of somebody who, if he was making any sense at all, had quite a talent.

Sam Winch did not overwhelm easily. His mind paralyzed least in situations where it ought to have been bewildered most. If he had not trained it to have that faculty, Sam Winch's grave would long ago have been lost in the mud of some foreign shore.

He had already decided that the first evidence of his senses was completely wrong. It wasn't that something had happened to New York. Something had happened to him—and to the small group of people who were now slowly drifting into a knot around him and the golden man. The cars along the curb were *not* the same ones that had been rolling along Fifth Avenue a moment earlier. The clouds had *not* moved around like scenic theater drops in the sky. And, most of all, eight

million people had *not*, suddenly and inexplicably parked their cars, made their beds, changed their underwear and evaporated in some simultaneous volatilization.

The pretty brunette who had knelt behind the young couple was back on her feet. She looked around, frowned, glanced quickly up and down the street, clicked her tongue as if she were signalling the completion of some mental process and said: "This isn't New York."

"Nope," Sam Winch agreed. "Not our New York, anyhow. This place has been evacuated. They did a neat job—fast, but neat. They were in a hurry, or they wouldn't have just left their cars outside—not here, not downtown where you can't usually park. I figure it didn't take them more than a couple of days, but that's still a far cry from being a split second. And look at the dust, down there in the street. Pigeon tracks in it. I say about a week. A week since this place was left empty."

The brunette—Sam judged her to be about thirty, which is a good age to have picked up practical sense, because you haven't lost your looks yet—nodded at him. "We weren't in the library any week. So this isn't New York."

Sam Winch turned to the golden man. "What place is it, then?"

"New York," the man answered with a helpless spread of his hands.

"Mm," Sam said. He frowned, thought of something, and said: "All right, if it looks like New York, I guess that's what whoever built it might call it." He looked shrewdly at the golden man. "What planet?"

"Earth."

"Dandy!" Sam Winch cursed. "Look—are you alone in this place?"

"Yes." It was a sad answer.

"You build it?"

"No. I found it."

"Found it."

"Yes. I—I woke up one morning, on a hill, looking up at the sunrise. I stood up, and realized I was alive. I saw a city across a river, and a shining bridge. I came here. I've been everywhere in the city, and there's no one—nothing. I was lonely."

"Phew! You mean, you've only been alive about a week, as far as you know?"

"Yes."

"You do a good job with the language."

"I—I just seem to know it . . . I know others, too . . ."

He looked up at a balding, thin little man with a straggly moustache, who was standing behind all the others. "*As buvau visai vienas,*" he said to the balding man.

"He . . . he says he was all alone," the balding man told Sam Winch. "In Lithuanian." The man mopped his forehead with a wadded handkerchief. "My name's Marks. Used to be Markevicius."

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Marks. I'm Sam Winch. It's already been established he was lonely—though not in Lithuanian." He shrugged and shook his head. "I thought maybe we'd been picked up by somebody on Mars, or something, and maybe the Martians have a New York, too. It was a wild idea, but it's a wild situation. Also, I was wrong, for all practical purposes. Either the Martians spoke English—and Lithuanian—and were exactly like us right down to the classified ads in the New York *Times*—in which case we might as well act as if this is the New York we knew—or this *is* the New York we knew, somehow—though I doubt it—or it's a cockeyed mirage and we're up to the ears in it—or maybe it's all a Russian trick and I'm a baked apple—or maybe it's the heat of the day. If you're getting the idea I'm out of ideas, you're right.

"Say, friend," he said to the golden man, "you got a name?"

"No. I . . . just *know* . . . a lot of things, but I don't know my name."

"Well, that's no help," Sam Winch sighed.

"You might call me . . . Friend?" he said with a hungry question in his voice.

"Well, yes . . . sure—why not?" Sam Winch grinned. "Okay, Friend. And you brought us here."

"Yes."

"How?"

"I don't know. I was lonely, and . . ." He gestured helplessly.

"There we were. And here you are. You don't know much more about it than we do, do you?"

"No. I'm sorry."

Sam Winch laughed suddenly and genuinely. He grinned at the startled faces of the other people. "We don't know where we are, or how we got here. Neither does the fellow that brought us. This could get to be fun before it's over." The idea pleased him. He looked across the group of woebegone people and saw the brunette's eyes twinkling in response. Damn it, he *liked*

that woman! This *could* be fun.

"Can you send us back?" he suddenly asked Friend.

"Yes. I don't know how it would work, but I know I can."

"Anytime?"

"Yes."

"Will you do it?"

"No."

There was an outburst of surprise and anger from the other people, who had brightened into hope, only to be shocked by Friend's answer. Sam looked at the brunette. She seemed to be taking it as calmly as he was.

Friend looked stubbornly at them all. "I don't want to send you back. I want you here. Forever. I'm lonely." He set himself flat-footed, his fists knotted at his sides like an angry boy's. But he was seven and a half feet tall, bronzed, muscular, and glowing.

"I," said Sam, "for one, am not going to argue with you." Well, sir, he thought to himself, this is going to be a real toughie after all. I'll lick it in the end, but it's going to be a real battle, I can see that.

In a way, he liked the idea. But that was the kind of a man he was.

Friend seemed to have no idea of what to do after he'd made his statement. He held his stubborn pose for a moment, then slowly relaxed and seemed to be a little ashamed of himself. He looked down at his feet, refusing to meet anyone's eyes, and walked over to the base of one of the paired stone lions that guard the Public Library against harm from the shops across Fifth Avenue. He sat down on the steps and leaned his shoulder against the base. He put his elbows on his knees and cupped his chin in his hands.

Sam Winch looked at him for a moment, and shrugged. He turned to the people standing on the steps. It was time to get things organized.

"My name's Sam Winch, as I've already said. I know Mr. Marks. I think the rest of us ought to introduce ourselves. We may be in each other's company for some time."

That might not have been the most cheering way to put it. But the sooner everyone realized this was a serious situation, and developed a common understanding of it, the sooner they could make a concerted effort to get out of this. Looking at them, he could see it hadn't all quite sunk in yet. The young couple, for instance. They'd been planning a trip. But not like this. So far, Sam Winch had

held things together by moving in and making himself spokesman before a real panic could set in. But that wasn't going to last. Not much longer.

"Yes, you're right," the man of the couple said. He had himself under control. He was an intense-looking, cleancut boy with a determined jaw. He looked as if he could be hell on wheels on a football field, and Sam Winch envied him for being as young as he was. "My name's Paul Horvath. This is my wife, Gretchen."

Sam shook hands gravely, first with Gretchen Horvath and then with her husband. "Pleased to know you." He liked the way neither of them seemed to be embarrased by having knelt to Friend. If he'd been as close as they were, he might have had the impulse himself.

Gretchen Horvath was a little pale, and her eyes were still wider than normal. But she was coming out of it in a hurry. "I'm very glad you're here, Mr. Winch," she said in a composed voice, and managed to do it so that it was recognition of Sam's obvious competence without being any kind of slur on her husband.

Mr. Marks nodded, wiping his face with the handkerchief again. "Me, too."

A gangling boy wearing khaki pants and a T-shirt, with an armful of books in N. Y. U. covers, had come down the stairs and stopped next to Mr. Marks. "My name's Ted Fontaine." He looked preoccupied. "I've got an exam this afternoon," he said.

"You may not make it," Sam replied. He grinned. "You've got a reasonable excuse, though."

Fontaine answered the grin with a pale copy. "Yeah," he said hollowly. Sam gave him a close look. It might get tricky if one of them persisted in being frightened, instead of accepting the situation and setting out to do something about it.

But there was no telling for sure, this early in the game. He made a mental question mark beside Fontaine's name in his inventory, and turned to the brunette with a half-grin and a raised eyebrow.

The brunette smiled back at him. "I'm Betty Burroughs. What do we do now?"

Sam thought it over quickly. This was all of them, and they couldn't just stay here indefinitely.

He knew what he would have said if he'd met Betty Burroughs under different circumstances. He decided to

try it, and see if Friend could be moved at all by someone else's will.

"Well, how about a drink?" he asked. "I know a good bar half a block away from here."

Betty's eyes flickered toward where Friend was still sitting. "I'll try it. Seems like a good idea."

"Okay, then, let's go," Sam said. He looked at the others, trying to make them understand he wasn't just following an aimless impulse. "Let's go, folks."

One by one they nodded, but none of them took a step forward.

To hell with it, Sam thought. If we're going to do it, let's do it. He tucked Betty's arm under his own, grinned at her, and took a stride toward the street. "All aboard that's coming aboard." He and Betty walked away at a perfectly natural, unhesitant pace, and the others followed. Sam waited for some reaction from Friend.

Halfway across the sidewalk, he got it. He was watching the reflection of Friend's glow in the store windows across the street, and he saw him straighten up.

"Can I come, too?" Friend asked plaintively.

Sam's grin spread over his face. He heard Betty sigh. "Why, sure, Friend," he said. "The more, the merrier."

Friend trotted to catch up with the group, and the seven of them went down the block to the bar. It was an odd retinue to be sure.

The bar had an old-fashioned flavor to its decorations — somewhere between French provincial and British Victorian — and Sam Winch had never been able to decide whether it was genuinely old or simply had been built that way. There was a dining room in the back for the office-worker lunchtime crowd, and that had always made him suspect that most of the atmosphere was prefabricated. But, somehow the bar itself had always managed to stay honest, attracting an entirely different crowd than did the dining room, and he had made it a habit to drop in whenever he was in the neighborhood.

This version of it seemed to be identical with the one he knew. He looked around for differences, and found none.

"Sam," Betty said, "the lights are still lit."

"Uh-huh," he answered. "I noticed. Remember the traffic signals?" He went around to the end of the bar, slipped behind it, and felt the draft beer

pipes. "The refrigeration's on."

Friend was standing uncertainly just inside the door, looking around curiously, while the rest of the group stayed together, just as uncertain but somewhat closer to the bar.

"I don't know," Sam said. "Maybe most of the power generator plants around this section are on automatic. But nothing's that foolproof. A bearing somewhere ought to have run hot by now, or a surge someplace would be bound to have opened a circuit breaker. Nothing runs perfectly by itself for a week. Friend—are you keeping the power going in the city?"

Friend wrinkled his forehead. "I must be, I guess. I know all about this city, you know. I know where every atom of it belongs. I don't know *how* I know, but I know. It's as if I built it."

"Maybe you did, after all."

Friend shook his head. "I told you. I found it." He frowned again. "I think I did, anyway," he added in a much less positive tone. Then his mood changed again. "I want some beer!"

Sam Winch raised his eyebrows. "Coming up, Friend," he said with a philosophical shrug.

Betty Burroughs murmured across the bar: "He's like a boy, Sam—I mean a *little* boy."

Sam nodded. First he wants playmates, he thought in confirmation, and then when he gets them he's not sure they'll play with him. Now he's mad at himself for having told us he wants to be friends. *We* didn't say we wanted to be friends; we got him to commit himself without our making any promises at all.

Betty finished the thought for him: "Now he's out to show us he's just as big as we are."

"Yeah," Sam Winch said. "If only he wasn't."

He began opening bottles and setting them down on the bar. Friend didn't wait for a glass. He strode forward, seized a bottle, and drank it down without stopping. He banged the empty bottle down, looked around defiantly, and picked up another.

"That was your first drink ever, wasn't it, Friend?" Sam Winch said.

"Yes, and what about it?" Friend demanded.

"Nothing, Friend. Nothing." Sam Winch wondered if he hadn't made a bad mistake. But, hell, he'd had to start moving *somewhere*. The way

things were going, Friend would have been in a trouble-making mood no matter what happened or where they went.

Mr. Marks and Ted Fontaine both took a bottle and a glass. Paul and Gretchen Horvath shook their heads silently. Sam picked up two bottles and glasses for Betty and himself, came out from behind the bar, and said: "Well, let's all sit down and get comfortable," in a cheerful tone of voice he hoped wasn't too phoney.

"Good idea," Betty said, and led the way toward the nearest tables in the dining room. The others followed, but Friend stayed behind at the bar, looking at them with a mixture of defiance and hesitation.

Sam knew he was waiting for a specific invitation. "Coming with us, Friend?" he asked.

But Friend was beyond resisting a chance to pout. "No!" he said angrily. "You don't want me, anyhow." He took a long swallow from his third bottle and turned his back. Sam looked at the rest of the group, shook his head in frustration, and sat down beside Betty.

They had seated themselves so that they were in a rough circle facing each other, with Ted Fontaine and Mr. Marks at adjoining tables, the Horvaths sitting together next to them, and Sam and Betty where they could watch Friend in the bar.

"What are we going to do?" Gretchen Horvath asked Sam.

"I'm not sure, yet," Sam answered slowly. "There has to be some way of making him send us back. He's moody. Maybe we can get him into the right mood. The trouble is, his weakness is the most dangerous part of him."

Ted Fontaine laughed shrilly. "He can bring six people from New York to this place, in a twinkling. He keeps the whole city running. And he doesn't even have to be sure how he does it—that's how good he is at it. Who're you kidding, Winch? We're never going to get out of here and you know it. We're his toys. He's going to love us and play with us and keep us forever—even after we're broken and all the sawdust has spilled out of us."

Sam took a deep breath. He looked at Mr. Marks, who was staring fixedly at the bottom of his glass. He looked at Paul Horvath, who was squeezing his wife's hand while the taut muscles bunched and quivered at the

corners of his jaw. Betty Burroughs was moving her glass back and forth on the tablecloth. Each of them was expressing his tension in his characteristic way, and none of them — not even Betty — not even, Sam Winch admitted freely to himself, Sam Winch—were too far from falling into the pit of fear that Ted Fontaine had opened before them like a man pulling the grating off a sewer.

But fear was an old acquaintance of Sam Winch's. He had met her before, in many places, and pushed her away and gone on to his objective in spite of her.

He pulled his suit away from his left shoulder and showed them the holster with the automatic's walnut butt waiting for the clasp of his hand. "This is one teddy bear with teeth," he said. Not for the first time, he was glad he hadn't broken his habit of carrying it even when it seemed faintly ridiculous to do so.

"Oh," Gretchen Horvath said in surprise.

Sam Winch gave her his toughest grin, his eyes crinkling at the corners. "I've never done anything outside the United States law in the United States, Mrs. Horvath. With the kind of world we have, that's about all I think is expected of a man who doesn't want his excitement second-hand out of a TV set. I will admit there are countries where I'm not welcome any longer." He thought back to a time when Whitey Hartz and he had been within twenty-four hours of governing a hundred thousand square miles of Africa—if a particularly greasy potentate's personal guard hadn't proved unexpectedly loyal to him—and an extra quality came into his grin that both frightened and reassured Gretchen Horvath.

He wondered if all of this world were like this New York—if empty collonades were drifting full of sand in the African potentate's palace; if somewhere, in some *cantina*, an open bottle and a chair pulled slightly away from a table marked Whitey Hartz's final moment.

He straightened his coat and poured himself a glassful of beer. He held it up to the light, watched the bubbles trickle upward, and then took a sip. "Good," he said. Here's to you, Whitey, he thought to himself. It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles.

"You know," he said to the group, "Friend's got a problem, too. He doesn't know, any

more than we do, what he is or where he came from. I imagine it bothers him quite a bit." He looked over Ted Fontaine's shoulder into the bar. Friend was pulling the cork out of a bottle of whiskey.

He frowned in his mind, behind an expressionless face. The fact of the gun, and the little reference to his experience, had dampened Fontaine's panic for the moment. But none of these people were stupid. In a very little while, they would begin to think about the fact that the gun could never get them back to their New York. Nor would it really be likely to stop Friend from doing anything he pleased with them.

Betty knew that already, but he wasn't worried about Betty. He wondered what would happen to Fontaine when that student's brain of his remembered that Friend had spoken a language Mr. Marks knew, before any of them knew Mr. Marks could understand it. If Friend could look at a man and find out things like that about him, then Friend knew all about the gun. And he would know every plan Sam Winch or any of the rest of them might devise.

They were at the mercy of something Sam did not care to try to define. With his bronzed skin and his single drape of cloth for a garment, with his golden cloak of light, Friend might easily have been a god risen out of one of Earth's old worshippings—a god of the dark forests and cold, frothing waters—a god of night, and bloody runnels on a fire-blackened stone; deliberately, peevishly, spitefully getting drunk.

There was a crash of breaking glassware in the bar. Ted Fontaine started and licked his lips. "I think we ought to get out of here."

Sam Winch was thinking he should have stopped to think a little harder before he suggested coming in here. "It may be a little late for that," he said. "Get set to roll with some punches."

Friend walked in from the bar.

He walked purposefully and surely, his face set, and carried a bottle by the neck. He marched past them, yanked a table out into the dining room's aisle, pushed a chair into place, and sat down facing them. He set the bottle down, put his elbows on the table, stretched out his arms in front of him, and folded his hands over the table's forward edge. The bottle sat between

his forearms. His knuckles tightened, and the tabletop creaked under the pressure of his fingers.

"I can get drunk, but I won't get sick," he said grimly. "I can do that. I'm a god."

"Sure, Friend," Sam Winch said.

All of them had turned around to face Friend. None of them could have borne to have him at their backs. Paul Horvath's arm was tightly circled around Gretchen's waist. Betty Burroughs laid her hand gently on Sam Winch's shoulder. Mr. Marks sighed. Ted Fontaine began to breathe quickly and shallowly.

"You think you're big," Friend said. "I brought you here, but you think you're big. You think I'm a fool—*I* know what you think, don't worry about that. Not at all. Don't worry about that at all. *I* know everything."

"You don't know who you are or where you came from," Fontaine shrilled defiantly.

"Shut up!" Friend shrilled back. He raised his hands and crashed them down on the tabletop. "Shut up, shut up, shut *up!* You think you're *smart?* You think it's all in *books?* You think school makes you *better?* You think you're better than *me*? *I* know who I am! I'm *me,* that's who I am, and that's all I have to know! I don't *care* where I came from. I'm *here.* I'll *show* you I'm here!" He leaped to his feet suddenly, picked up the table, and hurled it against a wall. It crashed to splinters, leaving a spiderish crack in the plaster. Friend stood in the aisle with his hands raised. "Now you know I'm here."

"Why, yes," Mr. Marks said quietly, "we know you're here. But I know something else. It just came to me. I know where we are. I don't know what you are—I have no idea of that. But I know where we are."

Friend — all of them — looked at him in surprise. Friend let his hands sink to his sides.

"When I first saw you," he went on in the same quiet, but wondering voice, "you were just a glow in the air. Then I could see you more and more plainly, as if you were stepping out through a fog. Though of course there wasn't any fog." He looked around as if he were embarrassed to be the sudden center of attention, but he went on. "But of course it wasn't you coming to us—it was us coming to you. But where did we go?" He gestured around him.

"New York? We were in New York, in the first place. So there are two New Yorks, completely alike, except that one has no people in it. I thought about that.

"I do a great deal of reading, since I retired," he went on. He looked apologetically at Ted Fontaine. "I'm not a real scholar, of course—not like you. I read what interests me; what catches my eye when I go through the catalogue in the reading room. Ten years, now, I've been doing this every day. My wife is dead, my children are married in Florida. I have some money from my Social Security and my savings—I have nothing better to do, so I come to the library.

"In ten years, I've filled my head with all kinds of things. One of the things is a theory that there are many worlds."

Friend was nodding. "Yes—yes, I can see it. You're right. I understand."

Mr. Marks looked patiently at Friend. "But perhaps my friends don't, and it's important that I tell them. Many worlds," he repeated, turning to the rest of them. "Not many different kinds of planets—that's a fact, not a theory—but many worlds. Worlds of it. If, maybe, Julius Caesar had not died of his wounds—what kind of Rome would it have been? If that kind of Rome, what kind of world by the time it reached the Twentieth Century? Very different from the one we know, but still Earth, in the Twentieth Century. Maybe even an America. A Roman America, maybe, maybe sending help to old Rome in troublesome times even though she long ago stopped being a colony.

"Or suppose Napoleon had fled to America? He could have—the offer was made, the escape plan was arranged—it would have worked. He refused. Why? Nobody knows exactly. It may have been some little thing that changed his mind. Suppose the little thing had not happened?

"Or if Lincoln had married Ann Rutledge? If the Dutch had kept New Amsterdam? If Robert E. Lee had chosen to stay in the Union Army? Who knows? But the theory is that these worlds *are*. That every time there is a choice between two events, *both* happen. That in some other dimension there is always a world in which the opposite choice was made—a world identical with its opposite, except for that one difference. As times goes by, of course,

the two worlds drift apart farther and farther, for that first difference soon makes many differences. But the theory is that all these worlds are Earth, all equally real, all aging at the same rate, all in the Twentieth Century, now —but different.

"I think that's where we are. In another one of these worlds. One that's still very close, because the difference only appeared last week. The difference that somehow took all the people away." Mr. Marks took out his handkerchief and wiped his face. "And the difference between the two worlds is getting bigger with every minute this world is left empty. Think of all the things being done in our world that are not being done in this one. If we stay here much longer, we may never be able to bridge the distance. We may never get home."

Looking at Mr. Marks, then shifting his glance to Friend, Sam Winch realized that the truth had invaded the room. He could almost see the two Earths in his mind; one Earth at first, spinning green velvet, with its Moon, drifting around its golden Sun in a long, lazy ellipse. Then the image grew a little blurred, like a double exposure, and Earth, Moon, Sun, stars—all —had just the ghostly edge of a double image sliding into view behind them. He saw the edge growing, acquiring substance, swelling, splitting away. Now there were two completely separate Solar Systems, superimposed on each other, and now they were sliding apart, drifting out, and he was standing on the wrong Earth, watching the Earth he belonged to growing small and indistinct as it dwindled farther and farther away in the darkness.

They all saw it. He could see the still expressions on their faces. Even Friend was touched by it. He stood where he had been when he smashed the table, but there was nothing commanding or deadly about him now. His face had softened and lost the taut lines of fury. He moved his hands indecisively. If he was looking for the bottle, that was down on the floor, on its side, with whiskey in a puddle around it and about a half pint left rocking back and forth inside. But Sam Winch didn't think that was what he was blindly searching for.

"I'm going to live forever," he whispered. "I know that. But you won't. You'll grow old, and die, and I'll never be

able to bring anyone else. I'll be all alone, forever."

Perhaps Paul Horvath thought he saw a chance. Sam Winch had considered the same thing—was still considering it when Paul Horvath tried it. "Why don't you send us back, then?" he said to Friend. "While you still can? It won't make any difference to you, if you're going to live forever. One human lifetime of companionship won't be more than a minute to you."

Friend's eyes narrowed. He pointed a finger at Paul Horvath. "Oh, no! No, you don't —you're not talking me into anything. Don't you throw any tricky logic at *me*. I've got you, and I'm going to keep you. What's mine is mine. Don't you go around thinking you can buffalo *me*!" He went up on his toes and glared suspiciously at all of them.

"I can't trust you. I can't trust a single one of you. You're all thinking you're going to out-smart me in the end. Well, you're not going to. I know what I can do. I know what belongs to me. You can all just stop. You can all just stop thinking you're going to put one over on me. I know what I know, and that's enough for me."

The idea, Sam Winch thought, is to get us out of what I got us into. "And," he said to Friend in a conversational voice, "we're all going to sit here and look at each other until we rot. That right?"

"No!" Friend glared defiantly, "that's *not* right!" He kicked the bottle away from underfoot. "I'm getting out of this place. I want to go somewhere where there's some excitement. Come on—all of you —we're getting out of here. I don't want to talk any more."

Betty Burroughs stayed close to Sam as they all filed out of the bar. "Now, what?" she whispered.

"Now, I hope," Sam answered her, "he's going to play with some of his other toys, and leave us alone for a while."

It was now nearly the middle of the afternoon. Friend led them out of the bar and back toward Fifth Avenue. He walked ahead of them, apparently not caring whether they followed or not, but not even Ted Fontaine thought it safe to try and run away. They walked silently behind him until they reached the avenue, and stopped when he stopped.

"I want to ride in a car," he said, and looked up and down along the curbs. "I'm

tired of walking." He moved along the line of parked cars until he reached a Cadillac sedan, and wrenched the door open. "Come on," he said. "We can all get in here. You drive, Sam."

"Be more comfortable if we took two cars," Sam pointed out.

"I want you all to come with me. I don't want some of you running away."

"Look, Friend, where would we run to that you couldn't find us?"

Friend stamped his foot. "I *said* we would all go in one car! *Don't* try and make it look as if I forgot how much I can do!"

They all squeezed into the car. It was uncomfortable, and very quiet. Betty sat in the front seat next to Sam, and Friend settled himself between her and the door. He sat stiffly, with his hands in his lap and his feet flat on the floorboards, to show he wasn't going to be impressed by his first automobile ride.

The key was in the ignition. Sam turned it, wondering if the battery had had a chance to run down. "Where do you want to go?" he asked.

"Anywhere. Take me someplace where there's something to do."

"Well, fine. But what kind of thing're you in the mood for? Do you feel like going up the park and rowing a boat, or do you want to go out to the ocean and swim, or do you want to go down to the aquarium and look at the fish, or what?"

"Just *go*," Friend said impatiently. "I didn't get in this car to talk. *I* don't know what I want to do. Take me *somewhere*. I just don't want to stay where I am."

Sam shrugged. "All right, Friend. Anything you say," he sighed, and pushed the starter.

The battery was a little weak, but the motor started without any real trouble. Sam backed and turned until they were free of the parked cars, and began driving uptown slowly. He watched Friend out of the corner of his eye and saw that at first the motion made him uneasy, but after a few minutes he grew used to it, and even impatient with the way Sam was holding the speed down.

"This car will go faster than that," he said in an annoyed tone of voice.

"Any car will go faster than most people can drive," Sam said. "I thought you might want to look around and see if anything interested you."

"I've *been* down on this street," Friend said peevishly.

"Want me to turn off onto another one?"

"No! I want you to go faster."

Sam rubbed the side of his head in exasperation and depressed the accelerator a little further. That brought their speed up to forty miles an hour. Manhole covers bounced a little under the Cadillac's thick tires, but the luxury suspension on the big car kept their ride smooth. Sam wished it had been possible for the seven of them to get into a smaller car. The Cadillac made forty look and feel like nothing. True enough, New York cabbies bounced their Fords and Plymouths along at that speed often enough, and thought nothing of it. But they didn't have Friend for a passenger. Sam hoped he was wrong about what was going to happen next.

"Faster!"

Sam took it up to fifty.

Fifth Avenue was one of the best-paved streets in the city. Even so, there were depressions around the manhole covers, and rough spots where Consolidated Edison had dug, cleaned up, resurfaced with lumpy, casually rolled asphalt, and moved on. The Cadillac began to show one of the reasons why it cost more than a Chevrolet. It was still a good, smooth ride. Sam wished heartily that it weren't.

"Stop playing with me!" Friend said angrily. "Go faster!"

Sam nudged the car up to sixty-five and hoped Friend would be content with that. He wondered if anybody had ever done sixty-five on Fifth Avenue before.

Car thieves, maybe, running from squad cars. Not ordinary, average people like Mr. Marks, or even the young but law-abiding Horvaths. Not Ted Fontaine. He wondered what their reactions were as they sat in the back.

The Cadillac was built to take sixty-five miles per hour easily. Fifth Avenue was not. It was no turnpike. It might look all right from a seat in a bus. But at this speed the ripples in the pavement were beginning to show up, and the manhole covers were crashing back into place now. They went from Fifty-Second Street to Sixty-Third in one minute, the buildings and Central Park trees going by very quickly. They hit a little square junction box cover that protruded less than an inch above the asphalt, and the suspension thumped.

"Faster!"

Friend was leaning forward, looking out eagerly through the windshield and watching the pavement flash underneath them.

At seventy-five, the tire whine was very loud. The wind roared against the opened quarter windows, and the car began to pitch just a little bit. The wheel was twitching sharply back and forth under Sam's hands—not wandering, yet, but responding to the jolts the tires took as they struck little inequalities in the pavement that were probably invisible to someone walking along the sidewalk.

They were into and out of the Eighties in considerably less than a minute. Friend's lips were peeled back from his teeth, and his eyes were glittering.

The wind noise was as loud as a continuous thunder, now, and the wail of the tires came back from the buildings on their left like a loud siren. "Faster!"

At ninety miles per hour, the summer breeze became a factor. The tires were in contact with the pavement only a part of the time, now, as they pistoned up and down. Sam could feel the ridiculous little warm-weather zephyr pushing at them with all the force that can accumulate in an air mass even when it rolls along at only five or six miles per hour. The car was reacting to every minute outside influence, now, and the ridiculous little breeze was edging it inexorably into the curb. He set the wheel to compensate for it, and every bump made the tires try to align themselves along the car's long axis. They could only do that now by wrenching the wheel out of his hands. They were big, heavy tires, spinning like flywheels, and they could do it.

They left the park behind at a Hundred and Tenth Street, and they were travelling at almost a hundred miles per hour when they did that. Sam was trying to hold the car in the middle of the street, but this was Harlem, now, and the paving was spotty.

The car had plenty of bottom to her, but General Motors had never intended her to be used like this. She was simply not manageable at this speed under these conditions. They were all over the street, the motor howling and the tires screeching.

Friend's eyes were glittering. "Faster!"

Ted Fontaine made a strangled noise and tried to

chop at the side of Friend's neck with the spine of a textbook. He drew his arm back so sharply that he struck Gretchen Horvath's face and bruised her cheek. Then he snapped his arm forward and struck with all his strength.

The golden glow burned the book to glowing ashes in his hand, and whirled them into his face. It burned his hand, as well. He recoiled with a sharp cry, wiping at his face with one hand and cradling the burned fingers of the other under his arm. Friend whirled around in his seat, anger distorting his features.

"Don't you do that!" he cried. "Don't you ever do that again!" It wasn't until the car rolled to a stop that he realized Sam had plucked the keys out of the ignition and thrown them through the window.

Friend whirled back. "What did you do that for?" he demanded. "I didn't tell you to stop the car!"

Sam braced himself. "You're going to live forever, no matter what. We're not." He didn't expect that to make much impression on Friend, and he wondered if, in the end, he would try to reach for his gun. It would be a stupid move. If he tried to shoot Friend, and failed, it would have been useless. If he succeeded, he would surely have trapped them all here forever, beyond all hope. What he was really wondering, under it all, then, was whether or not he would betray his pride by doing something stupid in the face of death.

It was then that Gretchen Horvath began to cry. She doubled forward, her face in her hands, and sobbed uncontrollably. Her shoulders quivered, and she inhaled raggedly, gasping, as the tears trickled through her fingers. Her husband had his arm around her, and had the sense to leave her alone beyond that. He sat looking at Friend with his jaw set and his eyes burning.

Friend was suddenly aghast. He looked wide-eyed at Gretchen Horvath, his hands on the back of the front seat. He was pale, and his lower lip was quivering.

"What's the matter?" he asked in an anguished voice. What's wrong?" He turned in fury on Ted Fontaine. "You did it! You hurt her with that book!"

"L—leave him alone!" Gretchen Horvath sobbed through her hands. "He didn't do anything. It's you. You—you could be so *good.* You

could be kind. You could do nice things. But instead you're the way you are—you're such a *waste*!"

Friend said nothing. He bit his lip and turned around slowly. He seemed to see the old Harlem tenements for the first time.

"I don't like it here," he said to Sam. "Start the car. You don't need the keys. I want to go back downtown." He wasn't ordering. He was asking.

Sam tried the starter, and it worked. He turned the Cadillac around, the big engine whispering so quietly that only the oil pressure gauge and the ammeter testified to its running. They drove slowly through the park until they turned off onto Broadway at Columbus Circle, and in all that time nobody said anything. Gretchen Horvath stopped crying, quietly, at some point along the way.

It was too much to expect Friend to stay in any one mood very long. Driving down Broadway, Sam took quick side glances from time to time. Each time, Friend had come a little farther out of his shell. His downcast expression cleared up gradually. The guilty look in his eyes faded away. He began drumming his fingers on his thighs and fidgeting.

At Times Square, Sam pulled the car over to the curb. Friend looked at him in surprise.

"I didn't tell you to stop here."

"You didn't have to."

Friend looked at the theater marquees, the hot dog stands, the cafeterias, the bars, the dance halls, the drug stores, the souvenir shops, the great many book stores—all of them screaming neon. In a music store, an automatic phonograph put a blunted needle down on a shredded record for the three thousand, three hundred and sixtieth time. The loudspeaker out front picked up the hideous scratching sound, and under the noise a piano began to faintly bang at a rhythm. A buzzing saxophone intruded a simple melody, and then Sam recognized the voice of a singer who had reached the million-seller record heights by composing and recording his own song, as well as by being a high school freshman:

"If there was only you,
And there was only me,
On land or in the sea,
I couldn't love you more,
Oh, no-uh, no-uh, no-uh,
Baby,

I couldn't love you more,
Than I do today.
Oh-ah, oh-ah, oh-ah, oh-ah,
oh!"

Sam Winch looked down. Friend's left foot was thumping rhythmically. He was looking around with flashing eyes. It seemed not to bother him to see Times Square empty of everything but light, sound, and mechanical noise.

Sam looked up at the *Times* building. The illuminated sign was running, but there were no hands at the controls. In a week, burned-out bulbs, little interruptions in the current, failing relays—all the ills that electricity is heir to—had reduced it to gibberish. The sign reminded him of a movie marquee late at night, when the theater janitor is in the middle of changing from today's title to tomorrow's. He looked at it, and it almost made sense, sometimes, only to turn into a group of mismatched, badly spaced letters.

Not quite yesterday's news, not quite tomorrow's. The sign was frozen at the witching hour, and Sam Winch thought he'd give a great deal to know what news it had been spelling out one split second before the clock tolled the first stroke of twelve.

Friend flung the door open and jumped out onto the sidewalk. "There's a penny arcade—let's go, everybody! Let's have fun!"

The arcade was one huge barn drilled through a building from Broadway to Seventh Avenue, and crammed with all the inventions of the mechanical amusement trade. There were automatic photo machines near the doors, poker machines, shuffle alleys, skee ball chutes, pinball devices, movieolas, mechanical horses for the children, and a shooting gallery. There were mechanical football games, baseball games, and basketball games. There were photoelectric rifles, ball bearing pistols, and machines that gave sepia-toned postcards with pictures of pinup girls, movie stars, and baseball players. There was a mechanical fortune-telling gypsy with a bland smile and a chipped plaster nose. There were photorelay machineguns, cable operated miniature bulldozers in sand-filled glass cages, and mechanical rocket ships, for the children. There were machines that engraved up to twenty-four letters on an aluminum disk, for identification or good luck. There were bubble gum machines, for the children.

Friend plunged through the doors. He held them open with his widestretched arms. "Come on!" he called again, and the rest of them got slowly out of the car and crossed the sidewalk. Sam Winch looked around at them. There was a hopeless look in their eyes. Even Betty Burroughs had a strained expression on her face. Sam couldn't blame them. He felt the same way.

Friend pulled open the change booth door and swept the stacks of dimes into his hands. He laughed gleefully and spun around to face them, silver pouring through his fingers and spilling on the floor. "Let's go!" he laughed. "Let's all have fun!"

He ran toward the machines, and the dimes he dropped tinkled on the floor, bouncing and rolling as if to follow him.

Sam Winch bent over and picked up five or six dimes. "Well, folks," he said, "let's all have fun."

Friend seized the handles of an electric machinegun and pushed a dime into the spot. As the little lighted airplane silhouette flew across the painted glass sky, the gun chattered in his hands, following it. He shot it down again and again, made a perfect score, laughed delightedly, and slapped the machinegun with a gleeful hand. He went to the next machine—a baseball game—and squinted in furious concentration at the slot where the little steel marbles would come popping out. As they came, he tripped the lever that represented the bat, and sent the marble flying into the home run slot. The machine clanged furiously, toting up his score, and the marbles ricocheted and clattered against the glass sides. He played with grinning intensity, crowing over his score and excited by the noise, and when the game was over he ran to the skee ball chutes and began furiously hurling the wooden balls into the concentric scoring rings. Bells resounded, and lights flashed. Friend whirled his arm, threw the balls, stamped his feet with joy and laughed uproariously.

Betty Burroughs dropped two dimes into a shuffleboard machine, and began playing listlessly with Sam for a partner.

"I don't know about you," she said, "but I'm beginning to feel a little used up around the edges."

Sam nodded. "Got any ideas?"

"Just one."

"What?"

Betty pushed a steel disk up the alley without looking. It did not travel fast enough to trip the switches, and slid to a halt under the glass guard, jamming the machine. "We could cut our throats."

"If he'd let us."

"Yes. If he'd let us."

Sam looked at the Horvaths, who were simply standing in the aisle. Gretchen Horvath was numb and drooping. Her husband was squeezing her hand. The light in his eyes was desperate.

Ted Fontaine had dropped sideways on the seat in an automatic photo booth, his hand over his eyes, his shoulders slumped. He was trembling, and did not seem to realize it. Mr. Marks was running one of the remote-control bulldozers. It was spinning on one track, around and around, backwards, leaving a circle in the sand.

"Sam, how much longer do you think this can go on before something snaps?"

"Just about as long as he wants it to, I guess, Hon," Sam Winch said. He had found an old pool cue on one of the other shuffleboard machines, and used it to fish out the stalled disk. He sent it up the alley with a tired snap of his arm. It scored a strike and came shooting back out. "I think he's got me beat. I really do."

The minute he said it, he rebelled. Something inside him rose up in outrage. "No!" he said violently. "I don't mean that!" It had been true a moment ago. It was not true now. There was too much pride in him. There were too many scars on his body, too many scarred memories in his brain for him to give up. If he surrendered once, he knew, it would destroy all the times when he had not. He would be betraying the thing that made him different from other men —different and, he was sure, more alive. He would be betraying himself, and that was something Sam Winch could not do and remain Sam Winch.

It was not in him to commit suicide. He listened to the crash of bells where Friend was firing a spotlight rifle at a photoelectric bear that waved its paws and roared with each hit as if the hunter's accuracy were driving it mad. Sam Winch thought of himself suddenly breaking out of there if he were the bear, tearing loose from his tracks and wires, shedding his mechanical origin, and lumbering down on Friend with

paws upraised and jaws agape, while Friend tried to stop him with a rifle that was, after all, only a complicated flashlight.

He picked up the pool cue suddenly and crashed it down on the alley. The wood split, and the cue divided into two pieces.

But Friend was making so much noise, no one heard the sound. Sam Winch looked down at the broken cue.

"But I don't know what to do," he said. With all his determination he was helpless.

Friend lurched among the machines like a man possessed. He went from the rifles to the football games, from the football games to the shuffleboards, from the shuffleboards to the poker machines. He charged from one end of the arcade to the other, working the movieolas, having his picture taken, buying a nod, a smile, and a fortune card from the plaster gypsy. He set the mechanical horse and the rocket ship into motion, and he punched out his name on the engraving machine. He pulled postcard photo after photo out of the movie star machines, and scattered pictures of baseball players into the air.

And Sam Winch, looking at him, suddenly realized something.

Friend wasn't having any fun.

There was more desperation than delight, now, in the way he ran from machine to machine. He did not even look at the cards he bought. He pushed dimes into the machines, pulled levers, punched buttons, yanked triggers; the machines clanged their bells and flashed their lights; the scores ran up, but Friend hardly looked at them. He ran back to the change booth for more dimes, until he had exhausted the supply. He began picking up coins he'd dropped carelessly, searching for them in corners and under machines, pushing the heavy cabinets impatiently aside until, finally, a baseball machine rocked, tilted too far, and crashed, broken, spilling out marbles among the pieces of splintered glass on the floor.

Friend stood looking at it. He dropped the handful of dimes, and kicked them away. He looked around, searching for something, and could not find it.

The mechanical duck silhouettes in the shooting gallery creaked as they ran along their endless chain in the water tank. Friend heard them, in the silence, and

turned to them as if they were white messengers of hope, instead of being battered tin.

"Sam!" He ran up to him. "Shoot with me!"

Sam looked up at him with something like pity. "Why?"

Friend clutched at his arm. "Sam—*please*!"

Sam nodded. He walked over to the counter where the guns were, and loaded two of them. "All right—you go first."

Paul Horvath suddenly stepped up to them. His face was tense. "I want to try it, too," he said.

Sam raised his eyebrows.

"Give me a gun, Sam," Paul Horvath said tightly.

Silently, Sam Winch loaded a third rifle and handed it to him. Horvath pumped a shell viciously into the chamber.

"Ready," he gritted.

Friend was paying them almost no attention, now that he had his rifle. He began to shoot, pumped the mechanism rapidly, jerked his sights from one target to another. He shot clumsily, wincing from the harsh sound, handling the disproportionately small rifle with awkward difficulty. But he never missed. He shot out the gas flames over the false candles, and set tiny spinners to whirling on their axes. He battered the ducks, and shuddered the swinging target that rang to his hits.

Sam didn't care how well his own shots did. He emptied his magazine, and noticed without caring that he had hit all but one of the targets he aimed at. Now Friend was w a t c h i n g him intently, breathing harshly, his hands shaking on the counter while Sam was shooting. A painful grimace contorted his face when Sam was through.

Paul Horvath stepped up to the counter, pointed his rifle toward the targets, and suddenly swung it around. He pumped eight shots at Friend from ten feet away. He did it with a look on his face that said he expected it to do no good—that if Friend let him fire at all, it was because it would do no good—and that said he no longer cared. Paul Horvath had taken as much as he could. He had reached the point where he had to do something, no matter how useless it was. He expected Friend to punish him for it. He was past caring about that. He'd had enough.

But Friend was past noticing him, or the bullets that flared into nothing as soon as they touched his shroud of light. Friend was sobbing, and

beating his fists on the gallery counter.

"I can't lose! I can do anything—no matter what I do, I can't lose! But it's no good—no good at all! I can do anything—but who am I? *Who am I?*"

There was agony in his voice, and on his face. The gallery echoed to the sound of his fists on the counter.

They sat together in a cafeteria, each of them as exhausted as the next, and looked at twilight on Times Square. They had eaten, listlessly, out of canned goods they found in the kitchen and brought out to the tables. Friend was as lifeless as the rest of them. Only Sam Winch seemed less worn than the rest of them. He was staring sightlessly down at his plate, but he looked more preoccupied than discouraged, by some small fraction of a degree.

Betty Burroughs touched his arm. "Sam?"

"Um?"

"What are you thinking?"

He shook his head. "I'm not sure." Friend's breakdown had upset them all. If they had to spend the remainder of their lives with him, it was worse to think of what might happen if these outbursts grew more and more frequent—if, in the end, Friend went mad over the riddle of himself.

"Are you still working on trying to get us back?"

"Maybe. I've got a sort of a halfway idea, but I just can't seem to make it take shape." He was tired. A lot of things had happened to him. He wondered if he would have felt this fuzzy-headed if it had happened to him, say, fifteen years ago. "Maybe I'm slowing up, Hon."

It happened, he knew. He'd seen men—big men; strong men who'd lived by their skills and wits for years, and never asked for favors from anyone—begin gradually losing their touch. He wondered if that wasn't happening to him. You never knew. Most of the men he'd seen it happen to had gone on trying to live as if they were still what they'd been in their twenties and thirties. They'd been pitiful sights, most of them, when they lived through their mistakes at all.

"Maybe this is something nobody could lick, Sam."

"I don't think there is any such thing." The answer was quick; automatic. "I don't think there's anything in God's universe some man, somewhere, couldn't find the

answer to. With strength, with courage, with intelligence, with faith—Man has a lot of ways of finding answers. There's an answer to this, and somebody could find it. But," he said, "maybe not me."

"Sam," Betty Burroughs said, "I don't know if you're right or not—about somebody always being able to find the answer. But I'll tell you this: if that *is* true, then you can do it."

He smiled slightly. "Yeah, sure." He pushed his plate back and forth. He stared at the tabletop, and lost himself in his thoughts again. "I was thinking," he said slowly. "About what Marks told us. One difference between our world and this one—no people. And it would have to be only one difference, in the beginning. You wouldn't have an alternate world beginning with two differences. You'd have two alternate worlds—three, with the original. What I mean is, you wouldn't have a world both without people and with Friend, if those were two separate things. You'd have one empty world, and one world with Friend, but with people, too."

Betty Burroughs raised an eyebrow. "That makes sense. And that would mean that Friend came first. Somehow, there was a chance of Friend's coming into being, and in our world it didn't pay off. On this one, it did. And then he got rid of the people." She frowned. "I ought to be able to believe he'd do that. But I can't somehow."

"Try it the other way," Sam said. "Suppose there was a chance that the people would disappear. Suppose that was what paid off in this world — and *then*, for some reason connected with it, Friend was born."

"But—*how?* Who, or what, created him?"

Sam looked over at Friend, who was sitting by himself, too big for his chair, too big for his table, with his eyes lost in the deep shadows that filled their sockets. He looked drawn and tortured.

"That," said Sam, "is something I think he'd give everything in the world to learn."

The silence lasted for only a little while.

Friend was sitting too far away to have heard him, but that, of course, made no difference. He looked toward Sam. His voice was empty, husked with strain. "I would, Sam," he said.

He got to his feet, stumbling. There were tears welling up in his eyes. "I'm lone-

ly," he whispered to no one. "I want to find my home."

He turned to the others. "I think I'm going to die. I can't live like this."

The notion caught hold of him. He was struck by the drama of the idea, and captivated by its simplicity.

"I'm going to die," he said again. "I'm finished. I can do anything, but I want to do nothing. There's nothing for me to do. I'm going to send you home, and then I'm going to die."

Paul Horvath jerked his head up. Mr. Marks upset a dish. Ted Fontaine jumped to his feet.

"I thought you said that was impossible by now!" he cried bitterly.

"I never said that," Friend answered. "I said Mr. Marks was right. He was right. It will be very hard, but I can still do it if we don't wait much longer. The difference between the two worlds is growing greater every minute. The distance between them is already enormous. But I think I can still put all of you back." He looked from one to another of them. "I'm sorry for what I've done," he said. "I'm very sorry."

"Don't be sorry," Ted Fontaine snapped. "Just get us back. Then die, and good riddance to you."

"That's a terrible thing to say," Gretchen Horvath said to Fontaine. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

Sam Winch took a deep breath. "Just a minute," he said. They all looked at him.

"Thank you, Friend," he went on. "I'm grateful. I'm sure we all are. But I'd like to speak just for myself, now." He stopped, and searched for words. "Look—you're an emotional, irresponsible brat. You've been playing at being a god with no thought for anyone but yourself. People—individuals—us—didn't mean anything to you. But—but—damn it, *I'll be damned if I'll let you kill yourself!*"

He slapped the table with his hand. "All right. It's out—I've said it. Send the rest of these people back now, if every minute makes a difference. But I'm staying. Either I find the answer to your question for you or I don't, but I'm staying long enough to try."

They looked at him as if he'd gone mad, some of them. Betty Burroughs didn't. And Gretchen Horvath said: "I think he's right."

Ted Fontaine said: "What kind of nonsense is that? What do you think you're *doing*, man?"

Mr. Marks took out his handkerchief. "I—I don't know . . . I think maybe there's something to be said for his idea. It seems — I don't know — cruel, maybe, to be so ready to jump away and leave Friend here with his troubled mind."

Fontaine was disgusted. "What's the matter with you?" he asked Mr. Marks peevishly. "Don't you want to go home? Don't you want to get out of here?"

"I want very much to get out of here, young man."

"Well, then?"

Mr. Marks shook his head in some puzzlement. "It seems too — easy, maybe — to run away and leave a man with his troubles. It seems that way to me." He turned to Friend. "How long do we have before it will be too late to send us back?"

Friend was looking at them in wonder. "I'm not sure—an hour may be too long . . . you should stay no longer than you can help it. No one can tell how many new differences are coming into being. I—I thank you, but you should go now."

Ted Fontaine looked at them all triumphantly. "Well? You heard him."

Now Sam Winch stood up, and something about the way he did it made Fontaine waver. "Don't be so eager, son," he said without any particular malice; and still, there was something about his voice that made Fontaine's eyes drop guiltily. "We've got time enough to talk this over, anyhow. A minute or two more can't make that much difference." He stopped, because he didn't quite know what words to use for what he wanted to say next.

He had wanted to get back —up to the moment when Friend offered to release them. Then, without warning, his attitude had changed. He still wanted to go home to his own Earth, but, more, he hated the thought of leaving Friend here to die.

There was no logical reason why he should be concerned. Friend had done very little to endear himself. And yet, not only Sam Winch but Mr. Marks, and Gretchen Horvath, too, felt the same way. Probably, Betty Burroughs did, as well. Sam Winch looked at her and thought he could be pretty sure of that. Paul Horvath? He, too, was looking uncomfortable, as though he were trying to reach a decision between two choices.

It was Gretchen Horvath

who put it into words for all of them, in the end:

"We can't leave Friend alone," she said as if the problem were crystal clear to her. "He's treated us not with malice but with indifference, which is worse. He's selfish, clumsy, and thoughtless. But, look at him. Think of what a man he could become. That's why we have to help him."

"Look," Sam Winch said, "think of this: From this moment on, there's going to be a world in which we leave Friend, and a world in which we help him. Which one do you want this one to be?"

Ted Fontaine bit his lips. "All right," he cried angrily. "All right! Just remember something — there's going to be a world in which we got back, and one in which we didn't. And which one of *those* is this one going to be?"

They tried, though there was very little to try. They sat in the cafeteria, trying to think of some way to solve the problem of Friend's creation. Friend sat by himself in a corner, looking at them with a mixture of hopelessness, anxiety, and sorrow. Ted Fontaine, also, was sitting by himself, his thin face dark with spite, his eyes enraged. And for all their trying, for all Friend's anxiety and Fontaine's spite, they could think of nothing to do.

"Maybe . . ." Mr. Marks said, "maybe we were too hasty." He flushed. "It's—a helpless feeling. We want to do something, but we can't. There's no place to start."

Sam Winch shook his head. "There isn't, is there?" He felt that somehow he had trapped himself—that all of them had let their emotion lead them into this blind alley.

And yet, they couldn't stop trying. Something bigger than fear of death or, worse, abandonment, was making them stay.

"I wonder what it can be?" Sam said in puzzlement. "What makes Friend's origin so important to us?" They all felt it. It was driving them all. And why?

They had no words for it.

"Give up?" Fontaine said viciously from his table. He sneered at them. "Having trouble solving the problems of the universe?"

Sam looked at him with dangerous weariness. "Shut up, Fontaine."

Fontaine bared his sharp teeth. "Sure. Sure, big man. You just keep on trying. That's what I like about people. Always trying to do some-

thing they can't. Get wise to yourself, Winch—you're not equipped to solve this."

"I said, shut up, Fontaine," Sam said.

Fontaine licked his lips. "You're not going to get out of this. You're going to stay here, and die. Give up, Winch—admit you're stupid, for once. Admit defeat."

Sam felt the rage thudding in his veins. All of them were looking at Fontaine with their lips curling involuntarily, and hate rising in their eyes. They could no more have helped it than they could stop their breathing. Fontaine was striking at something underneath the veneer of education and reason. He was prodding very close to their deepest instincts, like a shrewd and insane anatomist probing nerve-ends with a skillful needle. But he was miscalculating badly, somehow. If he wanted them to give up, he was doing the worst possible thing.

"What's the matter with you, Fontaine?" Sam growled, groping toward something. "Just how smart are you?"

Unaccountably, Fontaine grew nervous. Perhaps Sam had come too close to something. But Fontaine lost a trace of his assurance. He looked at Sam with a strange flicker at the backs of his eyes, and a knuckle cracked softly in one of his thumbs. He hunched forward a little, as if he felt something slipping just a bit, and wanted to be where he could steady it if it began to topple.

There were merely little things. Sam noticed them. And thought to himself that it was odd. Fontaine had been displaying obvious fear and nervousness all day, at an almost hysterical level. This now, was an altogether different pattern; quiet, controlled even in its uncertainty. It was the kind of pattern Sam would have expected from a much older, and deadlier, individual.

"Fontaine . . ." Sam murmured softly to himself, "do you *want* us to stay here, after all? Friend!" he called, "what's Fontaine after?"

Fontaine kicked his chair back.

Friend stared at him. "He's not what I thought!" he said incredulously. "I could always see what he was. But he was simply so foolish, I never looked deeper. I never looked deeply at any of you. It was unnecessary. You are open people—what you are is easy to see. But not him."

Fontaine was very, very pale. He gathered himself like

a trapped animal, and suddenly there was a kitchen knife in his hand. In the end, Fontaine's faith in his own abilities must have wavered just a little. He had needed a symbol of safety, found one in the kitchen and hidden it to give him the little extra assurance he needed to carry things through.

Now he had to use it, and what good would it do him?

They moved slowly back from their table, spreading out in a semi-circle, with Fontaine backed against a wall. "We'll do it, Friend," Sam Winch said coldly. "I don't know what he did, or why, but we'll take care of it."

Fontaine said nothing. He hefted the knife, and what he felt was plain on his face. He was lost. He had gambled on being able to carry his plans through, and he had known all along that all the knives in the world could not protect him if he failed. Only success could have saved him.

But he had the knife, in his hand, and it was not in him to fail without taking his revenge. No one could have mistaken him for a young man now.

He charged suddenly, a strangled scream of rage and defeat in his throat, and threw himself at the advancing semi-circle of people. He drew back his knife hand, and he was closest to Gretchen Horvath.

Sam Winch shot him four times in the chest. He was flung backwards, his feet skidding out in front of him. He cracked his bones against the floor and lay with his arms outflung, staring at the ceiling with glazed eyes.

Friend looked down at Fontaine with wonder on his face. "He *didn't* want you to go. He wanted you to stay, and fail, and be trapped here, with me. He wanted you to be failures, so that you and I would feed on each other's depression and he could be sure I would really let myself die. He—he was a very shrewd man."

Gretchen Horvath was crying softly against her husband's shoulder. Mr. Marks had beads of perspiration on his forehead, and Betty Burroughs held Sam's hand tightly.

"Why?" Sam growled.

"He—he wanted the world. He didn't care if he would be alone in it. The important part of the world, to him, was what was in the stores and bank vaults. He wanted me dead, and he thought he would kill you."

"Crazy," Sam said. "Crazy as a loon."

Friend shook his head. "No. No, he was only one kind of person. There are many kinds, and each of them has one thing he thinks is more important than any other. He thought he was that thing, in himself. He was only human, not crazy. And clever.

"Do you know what I saw in him, before he died?" Friend looked at them all with growing wonder on his face. "I know what I am," he said. "I learned it from him." As he spoke, Friend seemed to grow. Strength came back to him, with hope and pride.

"He had built a machine. It failed, because he made some one mistake, somewhere. But with that machine, he had thought to have the world. I don't know how he came to hit on the idea. I don't know how he learned so much, and yet knew so little. But he thought he could turn on his machine and give orders to everyone in the world. He could control their minds and make them his slaves. And he could go further. He could take all the people in the world and make them bring their minds together — harness all the power that lies in two and a half billion brains, and direct it to one purpose. He thought he could use that power to create a new being—a god, molded out of that energy and given life by the individualities of all those people, fused into one vessel."

Sam turned pale. He pictured it happening. Two and a half billion brains, focussed on one desire. The energy accumulated would be unfathomable. Its release would shrivel and turn to dust the bodies of those who felt its touch. The entire human race would die in an instant—to be resurrected in one form, one unimaginably powerful being.

Friend's voice was swelling, taking on depth and richness. He stood in wonderful pride, his head up. "On his world, he failed. Only blind chance gave him an opportunity to recoup some of the power he thought would be his. On this world, he succeeded—and failed, as well. He thought he would direct that being. He could not see that he would not remain conscious of himself, as an individual. He was not the kind to realize that. I—we—swallowed him up and made him only the small part of himself that he was entitled to be. For he is that, just as all you are part of me, in your counterparts from this world."

He looked at them, and his voice was full. There was power and glory in him, and fear, and loneliness, and greed,

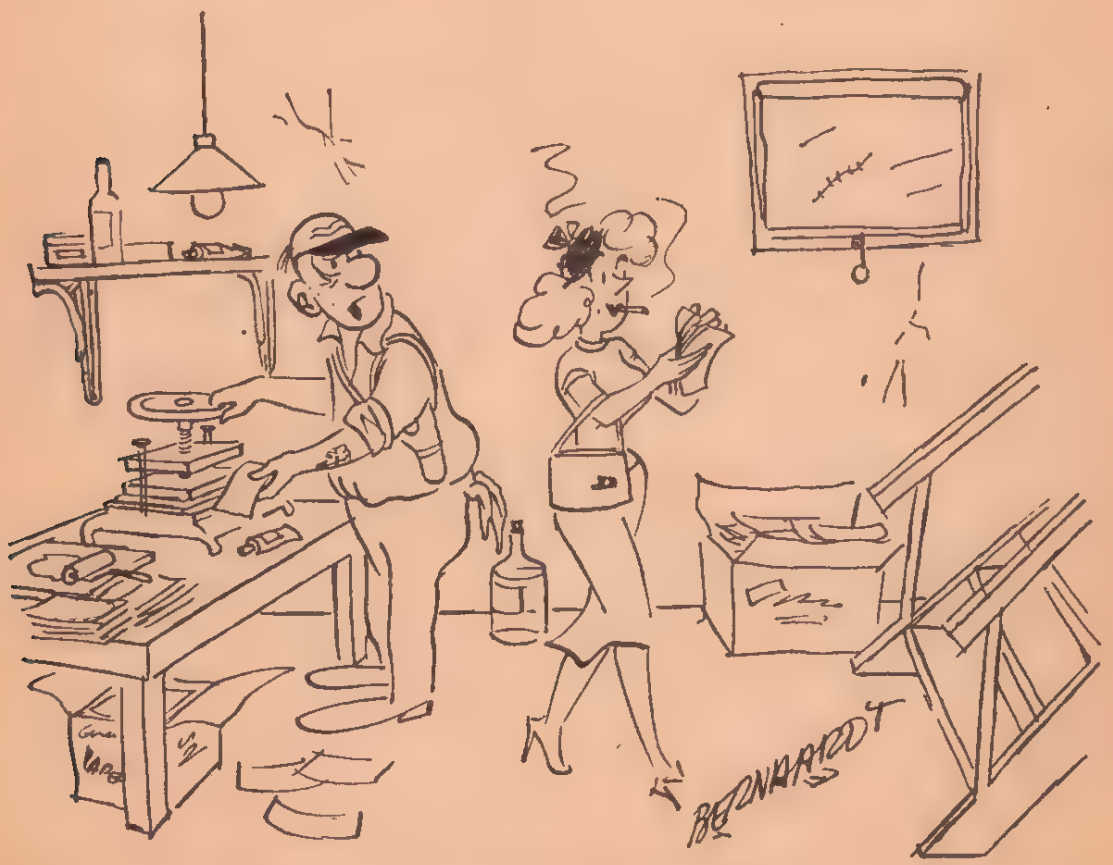
generosity, love, hate—"I am the human race," he said.

Friend turned away from the empty library steps. He had sent the people back, and the effort had almost drained him. His first great discovery of himself was waning a little, now, and he knew that soon the sadness would be upon him again, just as he knew that when the sorrow was past, there would be joy again.

He was a simple, but complicated being. He could know that no sadness is permanent, and yet, in its grip, despair of all hope. And, giving up hope, he could still know that it was coming.

He smiled a little at himself. With time, he would learn enough about himself to live a little less in conflict with himself. With time . . . but meanwhile it was night on Fifth Avenue, and the streets were empty.

THE END



"Take it easy with that dough, baby. Paper and ink come high."

Ten great Commandments have helped Man up through the ages. Ten glowing guideposts pointing to the stars. But civilization has kept pace with the expanding universe and the time may be near when Mankind must also obey—

THE ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT

By P. F. COSTELLO

"WHEN you press that button, Major Chafic, you'll be committing a sin Moses never thought of."

The man in the major's uniform stared down at the button beneath his finger and his neck turned beet red. For a moment, he glared at the little man in the gray denim overalls.

"What's the matter Professor Fancher—you running out of ordinary morals, so you got to invent new ones?"

Professor Fancher ran his thin, slender fingers through his graying hair. "Can you think of any moral viewpoint that fits what you're going to do?" he asked.

"The United States Army has its morals," snapped Major Chafic. "Man's whole civilization has been built on them, and don't you forget it! If there's anything more moral than the defense of human freedom, I'd like you to tell me what it is?"

Professor Fancher sighed. "Soldiers' morals. They never did include Moses' main commandment."

"Which one is that?"

"Thou shalt not kill."

"Baloney!" snorted the major. "We're not killers. Men don't become free by standing with their hands at their sides while some savage blows their heads off. Wanton killing, yes. But would *you* stand idly by, let an enemy carve up your wife and daughters whilst you spout commandments at him? That's one Fifth you can't hide behind!"

"Fortunately I don't have

The father of all explosions hurled them through space.

to," admitted the professor. "I'm not married. I don't have two daughters in college as you have. But if you want an honest answer, I wouldn't stand idly by—I'd be running, right behind my family, trying my best to get away."

"Fat chance!" said Major Chafic. "There's no place to run these days. But speaking of morals, how about your own? If you're such a pacifist, how come you're inventing things like the monster connected to this button I'm going to push in another three minutes?"

"That's exactly what I mean," explained the professor. "There's nothing in the Ten Commandments which acts as a moral guide in my position, or in yours, for that matter. There's nothing that actually forbids me to make that thing, and nothing that actually forbids you to set it off."

"That's right. It isn't going to kill anybody."

"Not at the moment, no. But what about five hundred years from now?"

"We've gone over that before," snapped the major. "In the first place, the risk is a calculated one. The effect of fallout in this particular case is far less than the exposure the average person gets from one x-ray photo. The cumulative effect is a long-range one, and also has been calculated. All through history, weapons and their effects have been countered sooner or later. In five hundred years, fellows like you will have discovered a way to circumvent the dangers you keep on pointing to."

"Yes, I know. You soldiers keep suggesting that there will be no future civilzation to contaminate if we do not preserve the present one. That's what you call calculating, isn't it? You decide to expose your descendants to a calculated risk, in which the calculations are largely guesswork, as a reasonable alternative to being attacked and wiped out in our present day."

"Exactly. And that's why, when I push this button, I won't be committing any sin, as you sanctimoniously choose to call it. Quite the reverse, I may be performing an act which may one day be hailed as a part of the process that saved mankind from extinction."

The professor glanced at the clock. "Better get ready to push your button," he warned. "It's almost time. Ten seconds to count-off."

Major Chafic looked at the clock, turned his square body

back toward the instrument panel and cleared his throat. The next eight seconds passed in complete silence but for the humming sound that announced there were high-tension cables leading into this underground room. On the television screen that showed the desert outside, forty miles away, nothing was visible but the growing dawn, and the stark outlines of the five-hundred-foot tower that jutted into the Nevada sky. At the top of the tower was a square cubicle which housed the bomb that was so soon to send its mushroom into the heavens, and the firing mechanism that had been so rigidly checked to prevent non-operation. Sometimes it didn't operate, and then men had to face death hanging over their heads on a slender thread of chance. Professor Fancher hoped he wouldn't have to climb that tower as he had done on two previous occasions. The Death grinning down from above as he climbed was not easy to face.

"One minute to zero . . ."

The crack in the major's voice was wider than he had hoped against. He'd wanted to show no signs of strain . . .

He swallowed hard, shot an angry glance at the professor, which missed its target because the professor was staring at the television screen. He went on with the count-off.

At zero he touched the button.

The screen went white. Thirty-seven seconds later it went black. Sixteen seconds later the lights went out.

The major sat in silence, except for a muffled "damned electricians."

After a long minute, the professor said: "No shock wave."

"No," said the major. "But it's forty miles . . ."

"Maybe not enough."

"What do you mean?"

"Maybe four thousand won't be enough. It wasn't those 'damned electricians', as you put it."

"Then what was it?"

"I think we can go outside now," said the professor. "I think it'll be safe enough. Then maybe you'll see . . . I hope."

"Yes. The atmospheric effect we're trying to achieve with this test should certainly be visible now!"

The major made his way to the heavy steel door and opened it. Then he led the way up the tunnel to the long flight of concrete stairs that led to the surface, ninety feet above their heads.

"Darker than hell at midnight," he warned. "Watch your step or you'll stumble over the stairs."

"*Too* dark," said Professor Fancher.

At the top, as they stepped out of their underground shelter, the professor's words were self-evident. It *was* too dark. As black as the blackest midnight—and it was now a half-hour past sunrise.

"Those are clouds up there!" said Major Chafic excitedly. "We've succeeded, Professor Fancher. The test is a success. In a few minutes it ought to start raining."

"And if we've calculated rightly, we'll have a brand new lake out there in the desert, where no water has been since prehistoric times," said the professor.

"It'll change the whole climate of this area. Future people will thank us . . ."

The tremendous flash of the lightning bolt was so startling that it left his sentence unfinished. Instinctively both men closed their eyes and wrapped their arms around their faces, shielding their eyes. But even through this protection, the glare that followed was so brilliant that it was as though their eyes were open. In the two seconds following the growth of the brilliance the professor began to scream.

"Down the tunnel, Major! Back into the shelter! That's a bomb going off. And close . . .!"

The major whirled, plunged headlong into the shaft, dragging the professor with him. He rolled half-way down the stairs, then managed to break his fall, and cushion the professor, who crashed atop his prostrate body.

"Keep your eyes closed!" the professor was screaming. "You'll go blind if you don't . . .!"

They scrambled to their feet and plunged on down the stairway to the tunnel below, arms over their faces, until they reached the concrete room at the bottom. There the major slammed the steel door shut and latched it.

"The lights are on again," said the professor. "You can open your eyes now, Major. This isn't the bomb you're seeing."

Major Chafic opened his tightly clenched lids and peered at the brightly lighted interior of the shelter and the control room. The electric lights were burning brightly, as they had been before he'd pushed the button.

"I told you it wasn't the electricians," said Professor

Fancher. "It was the effect of the bomb that doused the lights. During those initial moments, no electric energy was operative in this area."

"Not operating? But how could that be?"

"I'm not sure, yet. But that bomb . . ."

The room reeled and the very ground shook. Professor Fancher fell to the floor, and Major Chafic clutched at a desk for support.

"Bomb is right!" he gasped. "That's the biggest shock wave I've ever experienced. But what bomb could have gone off? None of them are activated."

"Look at the television screen," gasped the professor.

The major whirled, and stared. "My God!" he said. "There are two mushrooms out there in the old lake bed."

"Correct."

"But that's impossible. There was only one bomb out there."

"The second one's the one that went off when that super lightning bolt hit—that's where all our electricity went."

"You mean that second one's a *lightning bolt?*" asked the major incredulously.

"No, of course not. But it was caused by the bolt."

"How?"

"The tremendous electrical energy gathered into that one bolt is probably the greatest ever released on this earth. The heat generated by it set off the first water gathered in the lake."

The major snorted. "*You've* been struck by lightning!" he said caustically. "Even I'm enough of a scientist to know that water can't kick up that much fuss. That was a bomb going off out there.

"True enough. A bomb without a casing."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that water out there—that rain—is loaded with tritium, perhaps even pure tritium. What our test produced wasn't the tremendous electrical and rainstorm we wanted, but a *tritium storm.*"

"A *tritium* storm?"

"Yes. And every lightning bolt similar to the one that set off the first explosion that strikes will set off another, and bigger one, as long as it keeps on raining. If it should strike when that lake gets full of water, it might . . ."

The major went white. "Blow up the earth!" he ejaculated.

"At least it'll be the biggest bomb we'll ever see," finished Professor Fancher.

The ringing of the phone interrupted him. Major Chafic answered it. "Chafic here," he said. "The test . . . no it's not raining here . . . raining at the test site? . . . you can see that, can't you . . . the television's bringing it in . . . two bombs? . . . yes, there were two explosions . . . but that last wasn't a bomb . . . eh? . . . sure, I'll put the professor on . . . he's got it all figured out."

"It's Sanderson," he said, handing the phone to Professor Fancher. "He's blowing his top about the second explosion. Guess he's reached pretty near the same conclusion you have . . ."

Professor Fancher snatched the phone from the major's hand. "Fancher on," he said. "Get planes up there, instruments—test for tritium. And test for electrical potential. That blast was triggered by the biggest lightning bolt in history . . . oh, you saw it? It *was* a bolt, then? Well, the potential for another can very well build up, in fact I'll be surprised if it isn't doing that right now. And if it does, you'll know it. The lights everywhere will go out. Just before it lets go. Yes, I realize the implications. But the storm's got to stop within the hour. The energy calculations are pretty conclusive . . . Yes, I know, the bolt . . . Well, get those tests made. We've got to know the fact, before we can figure out a solution . . . I'll wait . . ." He hung up.

"What was all that about?" asked the major.

Fancher sat down wearily at the desk. "It means we're in trouble. As you know, that storm we created out there was calculated to the last drop of water, so to speak. It should stop raining in slightly under an hour. The dry lake bed should be full when it stops. But that lightning is something we didn't expect. Somehow, someway, that storm out there is building up electrical potential, drawing it from the electric field of the earth, and when it reaches a saturation point, is being discharged—right into the middle of that lake. And the water we've created is not the plain ordinary water we expected—but the tritium form of hydrogen, and maybe even some deuterium. Under the terrific heat of the lightning bolt, the tritium is being triggered off in a chain reaction."

"Haven't you any idea how?"

"An idea, yes. But only a theoretical idea. After all, we don't know what electricity really is. In all our experi-

menting with atomics, we've been talking about the glue that holds the atom together, and we've been ungluing it, so to speak. We know how we do that, but we still don't know the how of the atom or of matter, actually. We suspect that matter is matter because of an electro-magnetic field. We now believe gravity and magnetism not to be things of themselves, but just separate manifestations of another thing we choose to call an electro-magnetic field. Every atom has one, the earth has one, the sun has one—and we suspect that even the Universe has one. Whatever it is, it is what holds the universe together. And if I'm right in my suspicions, we've done something to that electro-magnetic field here on earth that is acting to build up tremendous energies contained in that lightning bolt, capable of destroying the field of matter, particularly of the tritium atoms down there in that rapidly filling lake."

"I see," said the major slowly. "And didn't you say something about the storm not stopping?"

"I did."

"And if it doesn't?"

"We've got to stop it."

"How?" said the major flatly.

"Maybe that's the eleventh commandment I was talking about, Major. To stop that storm."

"Ridiculous!"

"And others like it . . ."

The major stared.

The professor stared back. "You can take that two ways," he suggested.

"It all depends," said the major heavily, "on whether or not it stops raining. Until we know that, I'll take it the only way I can."

The phone rang again. This time the professor answered it. He listened intently. The muscles in his jaw tightened little by little as he listened. "Intensifying, eh? And it *is* tritium. Two billion gallons? Got any figures on that . . . oh . . . how much time have we got? Two hours . . . Yes, I know what has to be done. We've got to take Susie aloft. I know it isn't manned . . . yes, and I know there isn't time. It'll have to be detonated manually. Yes, yes . . . I know all that. Major Chafic and I will be there in twenty minutes."

"Where we going?" asked Major Chafic, watching as Professor Fancher laid the phone gently into its cradle as though it were the most delicate electronic instrument.

"We've got to get over to Area Seven and prepare to take Susie out of cold storage."

"Why?"

"Because there's only one way to stop that storm out there—heat. We've got to explode a fission bomb right in the middle of that black cloud and evaporate it, stop the formative action, smash that whirlpool in the electro-magnetic field."

"And who's going to do that?"

"I am."

Professor Fancher turned and opened the steel door leading to the surface. As he climbed the stairs into the blackness of the storm covered sky above, Major Chafic was close on his heels. Outside they climbed into a jeep and with Major Chafic at the wheel, they headed across the desert sands toward Area Seven, ten miles away. As they drove, Major Chafic kept his eyes intently ahead, while Professor Fancher kept turning to study the gigantic rolling black cloud that towered over the ancient lake bed behind them like an evil genie released from a bottle.

"Professor," said the major, as they neared their destination, "I'm beginning to get the idea of that eleventh commandment you were talking about. I can't put it into words, just yet, but I think I know what you meant. This business of stopping the storm is easy. You're going to take Susie up there, and you aren't coming back. You know that, don't you?"

"Of course. The bomb isn't manned, and it couldn't be, in time. That electronic potential is building up at a steady rate, Sanderson reports, and will be at release peak in about one hour and forty minutes. At that time, at the present rate of fill, the lake bed will contain approximately two billion gallons of tritium-laden water. It will be about one-million times the blast force of that Marshall Island test that almost got out of hand. Susie will have to be detonated manually. And only I know how to do that."

"Makes you sound kind of important, Professor. Hate to see you grab all the glory, and besides, I don't think there's a pilot at Area Seven right now as well equipped as I am to fly the plane that's carrying Susie. Don't mind if I go along for the ride, do you Professor?"

Professor Fancher turned from his study of the black cloud behind them and grin-

ned. "Forgotten that you're the boss around here, Major?"

"In a way, yes. I've been concerned with being a sinner. In my book, pushing the button was okay, but it would be worse than a sin not to follow through."

"Well, then, if you give the order, I expect Major Chafic will be obliged to obey," said Professor Fancher.

They drove into Area Seven to find it a madhouse of activity and confusion. General Sanderson was beside their jeep even before it stopped rolling.

"We've fed the coordinates into Maniac and the figures should be available in a few minutes. But I'm sure it'll only confirm my guess—we've got less than one hundred minutes."

"Will it do the trick?" asked Fancher.

"Maniac will tell us that, too. It's the time element that's close. It'll take time to get Susie into the middle of that cloud. And you ought to have about twenty thousand elevation . . ."

"Major Chafic's going to take care of that," said Fancher.

The major cocked an eye into the sky. "Straight up," he agreed.

The general licked his lips. "I don't feel like a general right now," he said. "I feel like . . ."

"Like a sinner?" said Major Chafic.

"Sinner?"

"Yeah. That cloud up there's against the Eleventh Commandment."

The general stared at the cloud, then back at Major Chafic. "I get what you mean. The Eleventh Commandment —Thou Shalt Not Make Mistakes."

"No, that's not it," said Professor Fancher. "Everybody makes mistakes, or there wouldn't be any need for commandments. This is something else. But we've no time for that—let's see what Maniac has come up with."

They hurried into the electronics building that housed the giant computator. A lieutenant rushed up with a paper in his hand. He thrust it into the general's hand. The general glanced at it hastily, gave it to Professor Fancher.

"There isn't that much water in the atmosphere," he said unbelievingly.

"No. We're making it out of hydrogen and oxygen, in a chain fusion reaction. That's why it's coming out tritium—there's a lot of free electrons up there."

"There'll be ozone too. Better see that we have masks."

The lieutenant rushed off with a nod, not waiting for the order.

"Good man, that Spencer," observed the general.

"We've got . . ." Fancher glanced at his watch ". . . exactly eighty-one minutes. The potential will reach discharge point in that time. And the rain won't quit for nearly four hours—not that it'll make much difference after the bolt hits that lake."

"Come on, Professor," said Major Chafic, grabbing at the physicist's arm. "We've got to get that plane off the ground right now, or we don't get to twenty-thousand in time . . ."

"She's on the runway, jets warmed up. You'll have rockets for takeoff, and you should be off the ground in seconds," said the general, running alongside them as they raced from the electronics building.

Outside a command car waited, and the driver gunned it away toward the airfield even before they had settled into their seats. They roared up to the waiting sky giant in a cloud of dust, and Major Chafic was first out.

"Get to your position, Professor," he roared. "I'm taking off in forty seconds!"

Professor Fancher turned to General Sanderson as Major Chafic disappeared into the giant plane. He shouted to make his voice audible over the thunder of the jets.

"Remember how we used to fool the public about the energy in a bomb by saying the energy of a thousand bombs was in every summer thunderstorm? We'll, we've made our own lie come true!"

He grasped the general's hand. "Goodbye. I've got to go now, or Major Chafic will blow his top."

Turning he raced to the plane and clambered into the bomb-bay hatch. As he pressed the button that activated the hatch, it closed slowly, but almost before it had entirely closed, a tremendous roar announced the rockets' firing, and a cloud of dust billowed into the bomb-bay. Professor Fancher choked as it swirled around him, and clung desperately to a leg of the bomb support as the giant plane accelerated as though pushed by a giant hand.

In a moment the plane was off the ground and the roar became indescribable. The floor pitched at a steep slant as Major Chafic spurred his gigantic winged steed into the air. As the pace steadied, Pro-

fessor Fancher released his hold and made his way to the manual controls of the bomb. Furiously he worked at them, making the necessary settings, rigging the necessary wiring.

He had almost finished when the plane began to rock and toss violently, and he realized that they had entered the giant storm their test had created. He staggered and fell, smashing his head against the bomb. For an instant things went black before him, but he shook his head, dragged himself to his feet. Blood began to trickle down his forehead into his eyes, but he wiped it away with his sleeve and finished the work of setting the manual controls on the bomb.

Forty minutes passed while he worked feverishly, hurled about as the giant plane sometimes seemed at the mercy of the monster storm, then righted itself almost with the savage personality of Major Chafic himself as he forced it to obey his hands at the controls.

The loudspeaker broke into life with a roar as Major Chafic's voice came over the intercom. "How you coming, Professor? We're at eighteen thousand feet now, and I'm heading her into the center of the storm."

"I'm about ready," shouted Professor Fancher. "I'm coming up with the firing button right now. Got to see where I am when we blow this thing."

"I'll hold her steady while you come up," came the major's voice. "But hurry. We haven't got all day."

Professor Fancher made a few final adjustments, checked his work for the last time, then made his way forward, carefully trailing behind him the wires that were attached to the firing button in his hand. The plane lurched and rolled, and outside the howl of wind became so strong that it was audible even over the thunder of the jets. It screamed like an angry banshee, and all at once Professor Fancher realized that he was hearing from close range the granddaddy of all storms. Perhaps never in the history of man on this planet, he thought, had there ever been such a wind.

When he reached the control pit, he slid into the seat beside Major Chafic and stared out into the storm through which they were flying. His eyes widened in incredulity. He turned to stare at Major Chafic, who was hanging onto the controls with all his power.

"How on earth do you handle this plane?" he screamed.

"I don't handle it on earth," said Chafic, his voice a roar. His face was awry with a grim attempt at a smile of humor, but it lost the humorous look almost instantly as an especially terrific blast of wind hurled the plane aloft.

"I'm heading her into the center of the storm now," he yelled. "I think it'll be calmer in there. But hang on. It'll be rough."

Professor Fancher clasped the firing mechanism of the bomb carefully in one hand, and braced himself with the other. Major Chafic bore over powerfully on the controls. The plane responded slowly, then more swiftly as it headed into the giant whirlpool of cloud the storm had formed at this altitude.

"We've got ten minutes," shouted Fancher, glancing at the clock. "Can we make it?"

Major Chafic nodded. "Put on your mask, and talk through the intercom," he shouted. "Smell that ozone?"

Professor Fancher nodded, and loosed his grasp long enough to swing the mask from its overhead position, and pull it down over his head, where its automatic fasteners affixed it firmly to his shoulders. Major Chafic did the same, and in a moment they looked like two gargoyles out of space. Major Chafic's voice came in normal tones now.

"We're at the center of the storm. Look outside."

Professor Fancher peered out into the blackness, which was now much less black. Outside there seemed to be a dim bluish glow, and all at once he saw the whirling wall of black beside the plane, from which they had just plunged. Far below it was much lighter, and he thought he could see the tumbling surface of the lake. Above, the vast hollow of the funnel of the storm stretched up unbelievably.

"This storm's eighty thousand feet high!" he exclaimed.

"We're going up higher," said Major Chafic. "Ought to make as near ceiling as we can get, before you push that button."

Professor Fancher nodded, forgetting that Major Chafic couldn't see him nod, then agreed audibly. "Yes. Keep her heading up, and we'll be going up when we let Susie go. She ought to break this thing wide open."

"She'd better," said Major Chafic. "I won't feel so much like a sinner if she does her job well."

"I hope we'll *know* whether or not she does," said Professor Fancher.

Major Chafic locked the controls, then turned half toward the professor.

"Don't tell me when you push the button," he said. "I will let you be the clock-watcher."

"I'm going to give Maniac five minutes of the doubt," said the professor. "Can't give that bolt potential a chance to get near the release point. Once the bomb goes off, there will be a rapid discharge of energy in harmless form. The heat will stop the formation of moisture, and the blast will destroy the whirling motion of the storm. In less than ten seconds the whole storm will disappear, as though it had never been. In its place will be the usual mushroom of a fission bomb. Fusion will have ceased."

"And so will we," finished the major. "You know, Professor, I've been thinking about that Eleventh Commandment while you were back there rigging up the bomb. And I think I've got it."

"Yes?"

"Yeah. It goes like this: Thou Shalt Not Endanger Thy Generations' Future."

"That's almost it," agreed the professor. "But not quite."

"How would you put it?"

"I don't like the 'shalt nots'. It should be more positive. We're living in an age of positive action. It isn't enough that man should just not do things—he should do the reverse, he should take positive action. I think the Eleventh Commandment should read: Thou Shalt Guard Thy Generations' Future."

Major Chafic swung about in his seat and extended his hand. "You're right, Professor. You've hit it on the head. That's the Eleventh Commandment all right. And that's exactly what we're doing right now."

Professor Fancher shifted the firing control button to his left hand and reached out with his right to clasp Major Chafic's hand in his. As he squeezed the major's fingers with his right hand, he pressed the button with his left.

THE END

If This Be Utopia

By E. K. JARVIS

Take the eternal urge to keep up with the next-door neighbor; add the wealth and leisure the Mechanical Age will bring; throw in plenty of today's high-powered supersalesmanship, and what will you have? Utopia? Perhaps. But are we sure we want it?

CHESWYN had been shopping for two weeks. He had been saving for six years, to be sure, but the shopping had taken two full weeks. He wasn't going to bite at the first offer of a thousand dollar trade-in, and wind up with a packed price on the new model, no matter *how* patchy Flower-Flower's fur was getting. No sir!

He'd been to at least thirty different showrooms, seen hundreds of signs telling him to TRADE IN THAT LAST-YEAR MODEL! BUY A NEW 1998 RAREIE! He had talked with dozens of dynamiting salesmen, with their colorful false-faces and studied back-slapping—but he hadn't found a rareie he thought he could tolerate.

They were either simpering, slavering six-legged bootleg monstrosities or completely impossible howlers that would wake Gert and the kids at four in the morning.

Gil Cheswyn had saved for six years, to buy this latest model rareie. While his other friends and business associates had been trading in their cross-bred animals, Cheswyn had been saving his money, knowing of course that depreciation would make Flower-Flower almost valueless when trade-in time came. But still he saved, to buy a really *first-class* rareie. The very best.

One that would up his position in the community higher than he could ever have gotten it, had he bought a new model each year. He'd lost a lot of business because of the

Each salesman hid his true emotion behind a smiling mask.

old rareie, but it would be worth it now.

The years of mild privation would pay off. Now came the time of the coup! Now he could afford the really deluxe rareie. There were only a few of this model in the vicinity, and keeping up with the Joneses next door would be a thing of the past—at least until the '99 models came out.

Gil's combocar (one of the newer models, with an air-conditioned and pressurized rareie cage mounted in the rear!) turned into the wide drive of the Bel-Valley Agency. They had a Crest franchise, and the Crest rareies were America's finest this year; truly the finest.

The combocar pulled up to the loading docks, slid into the tracks, and sighed off, the course-computer giving one final click before it stalled into silence. The door wheezed open and Gil stepped onto his dock's escalator.

Yes, there it was—the purple-striped panthaboar he had admired a week ago. It was in a freeze-block in the show window, with a sticker across the face of the block: THIS WEEK'S SPECIAL! ONLY $10,387.95 WITH OPTIONALS!

It was a fantastic price to pay, but it was the most exclusive rareie model available, and anything was all right after six years of being left in the dust. This would put the Cheswyns right back in the top social strata of Bel-Valley.

Cheswyn stepped closer to the show-window, examining the rareie. They'd done a good job of cross-breeding the chromosomes on this one. It was a handsome beast, about the size of a Great Dane, with the head of a panther, and the shaggy body of a boar. The boar's protruding teeth had been retained, and with the deep purple stripes running vertically around its body, the rareie was an outstanding thing. The sleek black head of the animal, devoid of stripes, held all the malevolence the eyes of a jungle beast could.

Cheswyn was momentarily thankful all anti-human instincts had been modified in the rareie so there was no chance of the thing getting dangerous—without being a docile puppet, either.

This rareie was a winner; a real winner—and it meant money and success renewed to Gil Cheswyn.

He smiled to himself, stepped toward the flickering colors of the front doors. The huge lucite portals swung open at his approach, and

the taped stereophonic fanfares reverberated in the sumptuous showroom.

A tall, wavy-haired, and immaculately-dressed salesman strode rapidly to him. This one's false face was a benign Chinese countenance. He had gone for understanding and compassion in the mask, and the mood was carried well. Instant trust was generated, and Gil felt—though he knew he should be more wary of these Salesmen—he'd get a square deal. A master Psychomasker must have made the mold.

Gil could barely remember back when the Salesmen hadn't worn false faces; but what with modern sales methods, and the lack of confidence by the public, due to shadey dealers, well, *everyone* in the business was wearing them now.

It made things more equitable. You couldn't suspect a man of selling you a lemon if you couldn't see his face.

"May I be of some small service, Great Sir?" the Salesman inquired politely. He offered Cheswyn a cigar from his gold service case.

"Yes, as a matter of fact," Cheswyn answered, accepting the cigar. He didn't really like the taste of the big green things, but it was business protocol. "I'd like some information about that special in the window—"

"Ah, *yes*!" the Salesman's voice rang sonorously. "A marvel of chromobreeding! A veritable Achilles among rareies! A buy if ever there was one, Magnificent Sir! A real, real peachy-keen buy!"

He seemed to want to go on like that for a while, so Cheswyn scratched the cigar alight on the friction strip the Salesman offered, and drew a deep breath, a deep puff.

"What optionals go with that model?" Cheswyn inquired. The Salesman's flack had come to a momentary break.

"Everything, Noble Sir. This is our finest model—our most *expensive* model," he added, with a touch of inquiry in his voice. It wasn't every day that someone came in and seemed serious about the ten thousand dollar model. It was necessary to weed out the shoppers!

"I'm quite prepared to pay for it if it suits me," Cheswyn snapped. This Salesman's impertinence was outrageous!

"Certainly, Magnificent Sir, certainly!" the Salesman genuflected. "Well, there's undercoating, sheening, a minimum-requirement digestive tract,

built-in collar with vocal identifier, suction pads on the feet —excellent if you live in one of the new airborne projects —and, of course, Weatherall resistance to climate, built right in." He went on in a lowered tone, looking over his shoulder occasionally as though someone might be eavesdropping, telling Cheswyn a few *more* optionals that might be tossed in for a discount.

It sounded good. Really good. The Salesman didn't even have to offer Cheswyn the five-year easy-pay plan, or the free gifts. He was sold. Cold, sold, and ready with his gold.

"I'll take it," he cut in, smiling broadly. The Salesman cut off his patter abruptly. It was rather unusual for a Customer—an Esteemed Customer—to be this eager. He hadn't even mentioned the awe and grandeur of the new model, or—or—

"Y-yes, *fine!* Just dandy! I'll be with you in a moment, Omnipotent Sir, just as soon as I get my ordermech.

He bowed away from Cheswyn, and stepped into the dropshaft to the Salesman's quarters. Gil smiled to himself, clasped his hands behind his back, patting one into the palm of the other. A six-year dream was about to come true.

On the dealer's showboard there was a flack sheet, made up of publicity releases published in some magazine or other, and Cheswyn ambled over, killing time till the Salesman came back. They were probably getting a line on his credit standing anyhow. He'd been fluorobserved and idented when he'd come through the door, of course. It was merely a formality.

The clippings were selected from an article called "Your Rareie and Mine" and it was from *Look At Life* magazine of two weeks before. Cheswyn had read it then, but he went through it again briefly to refresh his memory.

Many people have come to wonder where the term "rareie" was born. In the beginning it was simply that they were so rare. It was that easy. The privately-financed chromobreeders were engaged in projects for the War Efforts, but supplementary income was afforded by cross-breeding animals of an unusual nature for the wealthy, for pets. The fad caught on so quickly, that shortly, many of the concerns that had been dealing in war contracts,

switched production to rareie chromobreeding.

And today, the rareie's lovable nature has made him . . .

Cheswyn nodded mentally. It was so true. The rareie *was* lovable, and what family today would consider being without one? It was more than a pet now, however. The article went on to say something about *that,* too:

Just as the automobile, which at its inception was merely transportation, became a mark of social status, so the rareie became the mark of a man's position.

Cheswyn grinned to himself. As suddenly as buying the rarest rareie in Bel-Valley, *his* position was assured. He looked at the panthaboar frozen in its immoblock. He mentally tossed it a kiss.

This would mean a fortune in business! When they had their first rareie-warming, he'd corner all the boys that had been giving out their contracts elsewhere, and get orders from them. How could they refuse? A man with a rareie *this* rare, *must* be doing well. He looked back at the freeze-block in the show-window. Oh, it was a wonderful day!

"Here's your contract form, Noble Sir," the Salesman's warm syrup voice turned Gil Cheswyn away from the flack sheet. The tripod-mounted ordermech was being rolled up by a Servant boy who bowed away to the Servant's quarters, and the Salesman began pecking out the total with his golden-sheathed tally-finger.

"With optional defecation-disposal . . . and light-sensitized whiskers . . . that will come to . . . uh . . . let's see here . . .

"That will come, Most Illustrious Sir, to a total of $13,390.02 including loading charges, F. O. B. your combocar. You *did* come in a combocar?" Cheswyn nodded brusquely; this insolence wasn't called for at all, not at all. This was the second time.

"Shall we credit-rate this or set it on a convenient five-year—" he began, but Cheswyn cut him off, thumbing his wrist-purse open. They must have checked his credit, and that's why this Salesman thought he could be snippy!

"Cash," Cheswyn said shortly.

"C-cash?" the startled Salesman's mask jiggled. This *was* irregular. The fellow's credit rating had been good—but it hadn't indicated anything like *this!* Now he'd have to issue a cash slip! He wasn't

certain he remembered how.

"Yes, that's right, cash," said Cheswyn, enjoying the man's discomfort, and handing him the correct amount in neatly-stacked bills, and two coins. "And a cash slip, neatly written, if you don't mind." *That* was the important thing; the cash slip. Framed on the living-room wall under magniglass, it would freeze out any arguments the boys might have for not giving him the business he needed.

"Did you subtract the trade-in on my previous rareie?" Cheswyn added.

"I'm sorry, Sir, you didn't mention that before. But I'm certain we can take care of it. What model is it?"

Cheswyn couldn't look the Salesman directly in the eye-slits. "It's a '93 Delicate ostricheetah," he answered. It was obvious he had been skipping models the last six years. Something not quite a sin, but still hardly up to snuff, so to speak. "What's it worth?"

The Salesman fired a few select questions at Cheswyn, after he had scrupulously attached the lie-detector. In a few minutes he had ascertained that Flower-Flower's hide was wrinkling, her fur was patchy, her eyesight was so dim she could hardly spot his combocar's night-light to signal the household Servant's and that her excretions had begun to smell foul.

"Five hundred is all that model's worth, Most Great Sir," the Salesman shook his masked head sadly. He drew out the Dealer's Blue Book with suggested trade-in prices and running a finger down the columns, showed Cheswyn the quotation.

"All right, good enough, I suppose," Cheswyn agreed. "Unfreeze that one in the show-window, and load him into my combo." He puffed deeply—and with increasing nausea—on the thick, green cigar.

They moved toward the immoblock in the window. "What's his name?" Cheswyn inquired. "What's his code?"

Two Loadsmen issued from the Loadsmen's quarters, and carrying a defreezer tube, they moved toward the panthaboar immobilized in its freeze-block. "It responds to Gut-Stripper and suggested variations in your Pamph," the Salesman replied.

"We'll toss a Pamph for this model into your front seat. You've bought a magnificent animal, Great Sir. Just a magnificent, magnificent rareie! The only one within five hundred miles of Bel-Valley. If

it's a Crest, it's Classy!" The Salesman was rubbing his hands together, his face hidden by the mask, but raised to the golden dome of the showroom.

In an instant, his tone had changed. He was businesslike again: "Will you need a Loadsman to unload, or do you have a chute?"

This time Cheswyn's face flamed, and he turned on the Salesman in fury. "Look, don't forget you're only My Humble Servant, and if you don't watch your mouth, you're going to find yourself working a Mine-shift with a refuse-bag tied to your leg!"

He could see nothing of the Salesman's face, under the false face, but he was certain the man had blanched. A string of gushy, "I beg your Magnificent Pardon, oh, Most Illustrious and Esteemed Customer!" emerged and the man began to tremble violently. He clung to the ordermech for support.

Cheswyn turned away in disdain.

The Loadsman had turned the freeze-tube on the immoblock, and the clear substance was vaporing away from the rareie. Cheswyn marveled again at the beast's beauty. A miracle of chromobreeding—the rarest rareie!

"Anything I should know about this model?" Cheswyn asked. His voice was still rough, snappish; he hadn't forgotten the Salesman's insolence. "I know you fellows haven't gotten *all* the bugs out of these chromobreeds."

"No, this is one of our most perfect models," the Salesman hurriedly replied, watching the Loadsmen hypno-walk the panthaboar down the loading ramp. "The only thing we suggest is that you keep it away from extremes of heat or cold. They've used a new yeast-derivative in stabilizing the digestive tract, so this rareie's food wants will be slight. Other than that, it's the most foolproof model we've ever put on the market. A veritable Nova of the—"

"All right, all right, that's enough. I've bought the damned thing," Cheswyn cut him off unceremoniously.

"Pick up my old model as soon as you can," he added only a bit imperiously, striding toward the dock escalator.

"This afternoon," the Salesman called after him, bowing quickly from the top of the escalator.

Cheswyn dropped into the plush-lined bucket seat, and the course-computer dropped in front of him. He mumbled

his course-code-pattern at the panel.

In the rear of the combo, the rareie was sitting back on its haunches, its eyes still glazed from the hypno-walk. Lackadaisically it licked a front paw with its long purple tongue. The air conditioning in the rareie cage was spraying a wakener into the compartment. In a few minutes the beast would be completely de-hypnoed.

The c o u r s e-c o m p u t e r sighed, and the combo spun out of the drive.

Through the big rearview screen, Cheswyn could see the Manager Sir tapping the Salesman on the shoulder. Just as the combo whipped around a corner, Cheswyn saw the wild and uncontrollable shaking of the Salesman's hands. Papers fluttered to the top of the loading dock.

Cheswyn smiled to himself, whistled a few notes through his teeth. He punched out the threedee code for the latest Alicia Dreamus livee.

That would teach those insolent Salesmen!

They came later that afternoon and took Flower-Flower away, the tears oozing from her slitty eyes, the ostrich neck bobbing atop the yellow and green cheetah body.

The kids cried a little, but they were too engrossed in bedding Gut-Stripper down in his prowl-room. They first gave the room a scentreatment, cleansing it of all odors from the previous resident, then they put fresh raw materials in the foddermech, and set the controls according to the food requirements listed in the Pamph.

They were at it all day, which kept them out of Gert Cheswyn's way. The household was already preparing for the rareie-warming. Cheswyn had given detailed and explicit instructions so that everything would come off with punctuality when the purchase of the rareie had been made.

Servants were running about, altering the walls, consulting Gert as to what motif she wanted, fabricating the furniture of that era.

Gert had settled on a Colonial North American scheme, and the walls had been altered to white stucco, frilly with gingerbread and moulding. A many-dangled crystal chandelier hung from the ceiling of each room, over a hundred candles in each one.

The walls held dozens of candle-brackets, and the floors were a polished and decorative wood that cast back

the brilliant glow of the lights. They were not, strictly speaking, candles, for they were not made of tallow. They were klieg-candles, resembling the tallow ones exactly, but chemically-impregnated to give off fifty times the heat and light.

So warm did it get in the house during the preparations, that Cheswyn let down the force screen across the empty wall. One wall of the house was bare — nothing there but emptiness—until the force screen was turned on. Then it became as secure and interesting as if there were actually a wall in the spot. The force screen could be altered to produce shifting colors, or transparency.

Eventually, things cooled down, and the wall was turned back on.

"Very nice," Gil said, at the dinner table, later. He sipped with savor at his cup of instacaff, and looked around at the house. "Have the invitations gone out?"

"This afternoon, dear," Gert replied. She was a small woman, with prematurely gray hair, and a young, alive face. She had affected a colonial dress and ornate hairdo, curling and flattering.

"Wait till they see Gut-Stripper!" Cheswyn laughed. "Then comes the upswing! We'll be *rolling* in gelt, Gert!" It was one of his favorite jokes, placing the two words together, and it got the expected smile. Even from Gil, Jr. and Annie.

"Get him bedded down, kids?" Cheswyn inquired.

"Sure did, Pop," Gil, Jr. answered. Got him a box of Vitafeed and coded it into the foddermech. Also coded him in where he slept. He took to it real fast."

"He's cute," little Annie piped in, pronouncing the last word "coot."

"Cute isn't the word," Cheswyn said. "Wait till Thursday, and they see him! Then comes the blow-up!"

They kept Gut-Stripper confined to his prowl-room and the cool basement, for the better part of the week. The Servants were busily fixing the house, installing the klieg-candles in the wall-brackets, polishing the silver, doing a multitude of chores.

The high cliff on which Cheswyn's house sat, overlooking Bel-Valley, was copter-sprayed a shocking pink, all the way to the bottom of the cliff. It was quite a way down, and they had to refill the wing-bombs eighteen times. Finally it was done, and Thursday came.

Gut-Stripper was let up into the house, where he cavorted and chased his tail, and played with the kids. Cheswyn made certain the energy-field across the open end of the living room was secure. He didn't want the rareie running out and falling over that cliff.

"You're more than thirteen thousand, three hundred some dollars to me, Gutsy," he informed the chromobeast, chucking it under its sleek black neck. He was careful to use one of the recommended code-names. They'd bred all anti-social attitudes out, but there was no sense taking chances.

"You're a whole new fortune for the family and me."

He looked at the rareie carefully. Had it grown? It somehow seemed bigger, fatter, blatantly bloated.

He dismissed the thought and went off to his den to make a list of those he would accept contracts from—should they offer them. As they would certainly do, when they saw Gut-Stripper. The rareie was so much a sign of status, he had no fear. Particularly with the cash sale slip framed under magniglass in the living room.

But later, when the evening had progressed, and the family had eaten, and Gert had gone upshaft to change, he noticed the rareie again.

Yes, by heaven, it *had* grown! It was fatter, more round in the middle, as though it were ballooning. A faint trickle of spittle drooled from the rareie's mouth.

"All the better, all the more impressive," he chortled.

A few minutes later the rest of the klieg-candles were lit. Seven hundred of them were lit simultaneously by conducspark. Each candle gave off fifty times the heat and light of a normal one. But, it was a big house.

Cheswyn happened to be sitting in his contour when they went on. He blinked sharply at the increase in light, and felt perspiration break from his skin at the heat.

"Jupiter!" he exclaimed. "Someone made a mistake in estimating how many of those damned things we'd need. I'll have to get them to cut a bunch . . ."

The rareie began to grow before his eyes.

One moment it was a rather overfat Gut-Stripper, the next it was a monstrous, bloated, medicine-ball of an animal, its ghastly incisors drawn back, drool and froth oozing

over the rough lips, snarling like a mad beast. He *was* a mad beast!

Even as Cheswyn watched, the thing grew bigger and bigger, expanding like a balloon. It began to fill the entire living room, snarling, growling and growing!

"Great ghostly Godlings!" Cheswyn sputtered, leaping from the suddenly-constricting contour. "It's going mad!"

The Salesman's words came back with horrible clarity: *We suggest you keep it away from extremes of heat or cold . . .*

And . . . *they've used a new yeast-derivative in stabilizing the digestive tract . . .*

"Good Lord!" Cheswyn bellowed, edging toward the field-switch governing the open end of the living room. "The damned thing's rising like a cake!"

The rareie was lunging about the room, on its hind feet. The chromobeast was bellowing and flipping its two foot purple tongue in and out of its gigantic gash of a mouth. Its tiny feet were underneath its huge hulk, almost lost beneath the tautly-stretched skin of its bulbous stomach.

Cheswyn groped behind him on the wall; he felt the switch. The rareie took a few steps toward him, roaring in frightening tones. Cheswyn slapped at the switch with a sweating palm. The energy field on the open end of the living room disappeared with a pop! and a shimmering pinkness. It was clear outside, and the black of the valley was out there.

The rareie bumbled toward Cheswyn, bellowing horribly, death in its eyes. He backed away, edging around the wall. Suddenly he bolted and ran from the house, with the oversized rareie in close pursuit, staggering under the load of its own bulk.

It would be impossible to kill this thing! It was just too damned *big!* He had to get it away from the house, from Gert, from the kids. Its bloating had snapped all its restraining codes, and it was now—most likely and unhappily—a carnivore!

They were racing toward the cliff's edge—when the idea struck Cheswyn. He paled at the thought, but it seemed the only way out. As they neared the edge, he leaped to the side, stopping short. He stuck his foot out abruptly, and the huge, lumbering rareie ran into it.

The impact threw Cheswyn to the ground. With a howl and

a roar, the rareie stumbled over his foot and fell over the cliff. He hadn't wanted to trip it, but the thought of that animal running loose was frightening.

For a few seconds the sounds of rocks and pink dirt being pulled loose as the monstrous rareie crashed down the cliff broke the night's silence. Then a shattering roar signalled the landing — and obvious death — of the rareie, far below in the valley. Then the silence flowed back.

Cheswyn stood on the cliff edge, looking down its pink face, into the depthless darkness.

It would have been so smooth. The business would have picked up; Gert could have afforded the extra Servants; the kids would have had the most very rarest rareie in the vicinity. Now . . .

There was nothing. He was out thirteen thousand dollars, they had no rareie, the guests were coming, and it would be an even harder shot to putt than before.

Abruptly, even as the thoughts were carrying themselves along with logical directness, a weight lifted from Gil Cheswyn's mind. Sure, it was a fight, but that's how he'd gotten where he was today. Hard work . . . not hiding behind the social position of some strange beast. He'd have to do it all over again. He wasn't sure he could, but he wasn't old . . . there was still a lot of fight in the old frame.

What with these new longeriatrics methods, he could figure at least another eighty, ninety years. And by *that* time . . . who knows, perhaps they might have done away with money, perhaps they might have developed even better techniques for keeping a person young.

He scratched a cigarette alight, and turned away from the cliff. He'd tied too many hopes up in that rareie. He'd forgotten how to get things with his own two hands, and had used a subterfuge to get them. The rareie had become a symbol.

He drew deeply on the cigarette, walked slowly back toward the house on the summit. The rareie would have to go. The fancy life would have to go. But it wouldn't be so bad . . . not so bad at all.

He realized with something of a start that the world had turned pretty soft since he was a lad. The people were soft, like putty. All they worried about was their position in life, whether or not their

rareie was the most recent model, how fancy their clothes were, and how big their car was, and how extravagantly-built was their house. They had lost all initiative. They had lost all drive, all desire to grow.

But he was going to make a new start. He was forced to do it. All chance for recouping his business losses went when the rareie went, but it wouldn't be so bad . . .

Now, at least he had a future. Perhaps not the most plush of futures, but a future nonetheless.

He stumped on toward the house, and the night wind that came off the cliffs cooled him. First he'd sell the house and what was left of his business. He'd have a great deal left, even after taxes.

Taxes . . .

The salesman rubbed his hands together, and his mask quivered in expectation. The customer was pulling his combocar into the docks, and he was ready to dynamite him with the latest flack on the *new*, all-new 2003 rareie! He put the exclamation mark to his thoughts automatically.

As the customer, fat and wattled, eased up to the big glass portals, Gil Cheswyn (behind the clever lifemask of a bankrupt millionaire — he had thought that was an appropriate choice for a mask design, after the taxman jolted him with his figures) stepped forward, his head brimming with sharp slogans and with interesting forms of inducement.

He cleared his throat, rubbed his hands once more, and mentally ran over a proper, humble salutation.

The customer stood in the opened portals, and listened happily to the mento-recorded fanfares only *he* could hear. The company knew those fanfares would drive their salesmen crazy if they had to hear them all day; they knew that, because all their salesmen were ex-rareie owners. Bankrupt millionaires.

There was only one way to keep the drive in the populace. There was only one way to give them drive. And that was to break them. Some of them used their drive to advance the race, to pull it out of the culture quagmire into which it had wallowed.

Others used their drive to keep the populace turning over, keep them running into ruin, so they were *forced* to expand. Forcing them to waste their money on the ridiculous social phenomena called the rareie. It was a

trick, conceived by the statesmen, the watchers, the men who worried about the future. It was a trick, and perhaps unfair, but it worked. It was forcing expansion. Slowly, but surely.

Men like Cheswyn had not been wasted. They had been saved by ruining themselves. And the chain had to grow.

The customer waddled forward into the agency, dripping wealth, dripping indolence, and the salesman—Gil Cheswyn—strode forward to meet him. *Welcome, sucker,* he thought.

"Welcome, Sire!" he said.

THE END

"Quick, Professor, here comes his wife!"

POT-LUCK GENII

By ELLIS HART

Is there much a sardine can do after it's packed in a can? Of course not. Well, the same thing goes for a genii.

"NOW who ever heard of Turkish Period?" Danny Squires objected, loudly.

"Danny! People are staring at us, lower your voice!" Connie Squires reprimanded him. They stood on the street, before a furniture store, and Danny was determined not to enter.

"Come on, Connie," Danny urged her, "let's get away from these junk shops and go see some inexpensive modern stuff. You know perfectly well I don't make enough to start filling the apartment with expensive antiques."

Connie looked furtively up and down the street—for she was more concerned with a "scene" than with the argument itself—and then moved in toward Danny with a determined air. "Now you listen to me, Mr. Danny Squires. Did you or did you not marry me four days ago, and promise to love, honor and obey and all that other business?"

Danny's baby-blue eyes rolled to Heaven and he knew he was losing ground. With instinctive husbandly defense he answered, "Well, sure, Connie, but—"

"Well, then," Connie Squires proceeded, "I am your wife, and you have not taken me on a honeymoon—"

"I can't *afford* one!" Danny interrupted.

"—have not taken me on a honeymoon," Connie repeated with a certain inflexibility permeating her words, "consequently, we will buy a little furniture for that rabbit warren you so laughingly call our new little home. And little is right. But new is hardly the term; that place was new when Barbara Fritchie hung out her flag.

"So to make my life *bearable,* for the next few weeks, till we can talk Mr. Upjohn into giving you a raise—"

"Mr. Upjohn!" Danny fairly screamed. "You've got to stay away from the boss, honey. Honest, he won't give me a raise, and I'd rather you stayed away from hi—"

"Until then," she went on relentlessly, "we will decorate our apartment in the style I've wanted for years."

"Turkish Period?" Danny asked pathetically.

"Turkish Period," Connie seconded the choice.

Danny flipped his hands in the air. What was the use. He had known Connie was strong-willed when he had married her, and actually that was one of the many things that had attracted him to her slight, blonde beauty. But he was strong-willed too, and he was sure in the long haul, he would outlast her. Then he stopped thinking those things, for they had been married only four days, and it did not seem proper for a husband to be contemplating the "edge" each sex tries to hold over the other in the never-ceasing, unconscious battle of the genders.

"Okay," he said finally, "I suppose Turkish Period it'll be. What the hell *is* Turkish Period?"

She took his arm lovingly, and turned him around to look in the furniture store window. "Well, honey, it's not *actually* Turkish. It's more Mesopotamian. You know, all teakwood furniture and silks and . . ."

"Sounds hideous," Danny commented.

"So you're starting up again!" she dropped his arm, her eyes flashing, her mouth a tight little line.

"Now Connie—" he tried to placate her.

"Don't now Connie me, Daniel Frank Squires! I'm really ashamed of you, depriving me of the few little pleasures I need to make my life a boo-hoo, blub, boo-sniff, hoo-hoo . . ."

The edge was hers; she had melted into tears.

"Connie . . . Connie . . ." he tried to soothe her. She knocked away his comforting hand, saying, "You beast." That was too much for Danny. The words were so obviously put-on, he was suddenly confronted with the fact that his new bride was using her wiles to get him to an untenable position where he *must* accede to Turkish (Mesopotamian) Period. This somehow infuriated him, so guileless had he been, and he drew himself up in a fury.

"Now dammit!" he began.

Her tears doubled in flow. Danny stood there helplessly, hoping desperately that no cop would come along and say, "This guy botherin' ya, lady?"

"Connie, okay, okay, we'll *have* Turkish Period. Come on, come on. It doesn't matter what it costs, I can scrape up the money somehow."

"I only wanted a boooo nice

When Mohandus Mukhar said out—he **meant out!**

home to make youuu-hooo happy, and you're (sniff!) calling me all sorts of namesssssss-ooo—"

Finally, he quieted her down. When he had agreed to the furniture. They turned again, and walked into the furniture store. It was not one of the brick and glass onyx emporiums where sensible furniture might be found, if one searched hard enough and paid high enough and retained one's senses when they were trying to palm off modernistic night-mares in which no comfortable position might be found; no, it was not even one of those. This was an antique shop.

They looked at beds that had canopies and involved piping on the bedposts. They looked at rugs that were built up with pillows, so visitors could sit on the floors. They looked at tables built six inches off the floor, for low banquets. They inspected water pipes and hookahs and jugs and vases until Danny thought surely he would go mad.

Yet oddly enough, Connie chose very few items, and those she *did* select, were moderately-priced and quite handsome . . . for what they were. And as the hours passed, and as they moved around town from one junk room to another, Danny's respect for his wife grew and grew, for she was selecting an apartment full of furniture that wasn't bad at all, not at all.

They were finished at six o'clock, and had bills of sale that totaled no more than two hundred dollars. Exactly thirty dollars less than Danny had decided was enough to start their housekeeping. He had taken the money from his very thin savings account, and had known he must eventually start buying on time, or they would not be able to get enough furniture to start living properly.

But despite her method of getting what motif she wanted, Connie had acquired three rooms of furniture, at something less than what Danny had decided must be only the initial outlay of cash.

He was doubly certain he had picked the right girl.

They were tired, and filled with that subliminal warmth that comes only with knowing things are right with the world. And as they walked down the street, in a shabby section of town which neither had ever been in before, and neither knew quite how they had gotten here, they saw the empty lot. It was sandwiched

in between two tenements—clothes hanging flapingly from lines betwen them—and was weed-patched and garbage-strewn. It did not attract their attention in even the slightest, and they started to pass it.

"Let's get a cab and go back to the apartment," Danny said. He tightened his arm about her waist, and she smiled up at him coquettishly.

"Lecher," she said.

"Lech, hell," he replied snappishly. "I paid my three bucks for the license. It's legal; says so in the fine print." She playfully tried to jab him with her elbow, her pretty face turning pink.

They turned around to look for a cab, and the empty lot was gone.

In its place, sandwiched between the two tenements was a little shop. It was a one-storey affair, with a dingy front, and its front window completely grayed-over with dust. A hand-painted line of elaborate script on the glass-panel of the door (also un-see-throughable because of dust) proclaimed: *Mohandus Mukhar, Curios.*

Even as their jaws sagged . . . even as they boggled at the strange thing that had happened . . . even as they wondered at their own sanity . . . a little man in a flowing robe and a fez shot out of the front door, skidded to a stop, whirled and slapped a huge sign on the outside of the window. He swiped at it four times with a big paste-brush, sticking it to the glass, and whirled back inside, slamming the door.

Danny looked at Connie; she looked back at him.

"We're both crazy, you know," he said.

"Must be if you see the same thing I see." Her reply was as sincere as his had been.

"Empty lot?" he asked.

"Clothes lines, weeds, garbage, empty," she agreed.

"Little store," he pointed out.

"Man in fez, Mukhar is the name," she added.

Without hardly realizing it, they were walking toward the shop. They read the sign. *Big Sale! Hurry! Now! Quick!*

Danny shrugged and opened the door for Connie. As the door opened inward, a tiny bell went tinkle-tinkle, and they stepped across the threshold into the shop.

It was cool and musty in the shop, and strange fragrances chased each other here and there. The very dimness of the shop began to pass in a few moments, however, and they

looked around them. The shop was loaded with junk. From floor to ceiling, from wall to wall, on tables and in heaps, the place was filled with oddities and bric-a-brac. Piles of things tumbled over each other on the floor; heaps of things leaned against the walls. There was barely room to walk down the aisle between the stacks and mounds of things. Things in all shapes, things in all sizes and colors. Things. That was all they could think of when they tried to separate the jumble of the place in their minds. Stuff and flotsam and bits and junk. All over the place.

"Curios, folks," a voice said, by way of explanation.

Connie leaped in the air, and came down on Danny's foot. "Yowch!" he exclaimed, and then looked around for the speaker. He was standing beside such a pile of tumbled miscellania, that for a minute they had not been able to separate him from the very merchandise he sold.

"We saw your sign," Connie said.

But Danny was more blunt, more direct. "There was an empty lot here, then a minute later this shop. How come?"

The little man stepped out from the nick-nacks, and his little nut-brown, wrinkled face burst into a million-creased smile. "A fortuitous accident, my children. A slight worn spot in the fabric of the cosmos, and I have been set down here for—how long I do not know. But it never hurts to try and stimulate business while I'm here."

"Uh, yeah," Danny said. He looked at Connie. Her expression was as blank as his own.

The words of the little man had meant nothing; not one phrase out of his mouth had made sense. Cosmos, fabric, worn spot? What the blazes was he talking about? They had no idea, but whatever it was, this was as strange an occurrence as they had ever beheld. One minute an empty lot—the next a curio shop. And there was no way of building a complete store full of junk in the matter of a few—

"Oh!" Connie cried, and went madly dashing off into one of the side-corridors lined with curios. "This is perfect! Just what we needed for the end table. Oh, Danny, it's a dream! It's absolutely the *ne plus ultra!*"

Danny walked over to her, but in the dimness of the side-corridor between the curios, he could barely make out what it was she was holding. He

drew her into the semi-light near the door. It had to be:

Aladdin's lamp, naturally.

Well, perhaps not that particular person's lamp, but one of the old, vile-smelling oil-burning jobs, with long thin spout, round-bottom body and wide, flaring handle.

It was green with tarnish, and dusty with rust, and completely covered by the soot and debris of centuries. There was no contesting its antiquity; nothing so cruddy could fail to be authentic. But, "What the deuce do you want with that old thing, Connie?" Danny asked.

"But Danny, it's so *per*-fect. If we just shine it up a bit; as soon as we put a little work into this lamp, it will be a beauty." Danny knew he was defeated . . . and she'd probably be right, too. It would probably be very handsome when shined and brassed-up.

"How much," he asked the old man in the fez. He did not want to seem anxious; these old camel traders were sharpies at bargaining, when they knew you wanted something.

"Fifty dollars, eh?" the old man asked. His tone was one of malicious humor. He knew damned well he wasn't going to get his price, but as a starter that would bring up the eventual price.

Danny boggled. "Put it down, Connie, and let's get out of here."

He started toward the door, dragging his wife behind him, but she still held the lamp, and the little Arabian's voice halted them. "All right, sir. You are a sharp man, I can see that. You know a bargain when you spy it. But I am unfamiliar in this time-frame with your dollars and your Americanese, having been set down here only once before, and since I am more at ease with the drachma than the dollar, I will cut my own throat, slash my very wrists as it were, and offer you this magnificent antiquity for . . . uh . . . thirty-*five* dollars?" His voice was querulous, his tone one of wonder and hope and anticipation.

"Jesse James had a horse!" Danny snorted, and kept moving toward the door.

"Thirty," the little old man said.

"Five!" Danny snorted, "and overpriced at that."

"My life's blood you're sucking, "the little man said, but his eyes were aglint with the topaz shine of the trader. "Twenty-seven fifty."

"Seven dollars and that's tops!" Danny yelled over his

shoulder. Connie watched him with awe and admiration.

"My death is about to become a reality," the Arabian bellowed, tearing at the strands of white hair showing under the fez. "You rob me. Twenty. A seven-fifty drop!"

"Okay, okay," Danny turned around full and dragged out his wallet. He extricated one of the three ten dollar bills still inside, and turning to Connie, said, "You sure you want this piece of crap?" She nodded, and he held the bill out to the little man. For the first time Danny realized the little man had pointed slippers on, and hair growing from his ears.

"Ten bucks and that's it. Take it or leee—"

The little man moved with the agility of a ferret, and whisked the tenner from Danny's outstretched hand before the other could draw it back. "Sold!" the little man chuckled.

He spun around once, and when he faced them again, the ten dollars was out of sight. "And a steal, a veritable steal, sir!"

Danny abruptly realized he had been taken. The thing had probably been picked up in a junkyard and was worth but nothing at all. "Now look, I don't think—" he started to say, but the piles of junk had begun to waver and shimmer and bloom with light.

The little man's wrinkled face drew up in alarm. "Out! Get out, quick! The timeframe is sucking back together! Out! Get out now if you don't want to roam the eternities with me and this shop . . . and I can't afford any help! Out!"

He shoved them forward, and Connie slipped and fell, flailing into a pile of glassware. But oddly, none of it broke. Her hand went out to protect herself and went right through the glass. Danny dragged her to her feet, panic coursing through their veins, as the shop continued to waver and grow more indistinct about them.

"Out! Out! Out!" the little Arabian kept yelling.

Then they were at the door, and he was kicking them—literally planting his curl-slippered foot in Danny's backside and shoving—from the store. They landed in a heap on the sidewalk. The lamp bounced from Connie's hand and went into the gutter with a clang and clatter. The little man stood there grinning in the doorway, and as the shop faded and disappeared, they heard him mumble happily,

"A clear nine-seventy-five profit. What a lemon!"

Then the shop was gone, the curios were gone, the little man was gone, and they got to their feet before an empty, weed-overgrown lot.

In the face of all that, the lamp hardly seemed worth ten dollars. Lemon?

Back at the apartment, things seemed more final. Okay, so they had blown a ten spot on a piece of metal junk that was maybe worth thirty-five cents at an auction, so what? In the pale light from the overhead bulb, shining down on their empty apartment—the furniture they had bought had not yet been delivered—they seemed more depressed. A few packing-cases full of dishes and linens, wedding gifts they had not yet put away, sat against the walls. And the scene was so bare and depressing, Connie sank onto one of these cases with a leaden sigh.

"Oh, Danny," she breathed, her eyes closed. "Will we ever be able to afford a real house, and a honeymoon—oh, honey, how I want a honeymoon."

Her face was very sad. Danny sat down on the floor beside her, laid his head on her lap and put his arms around her knees. His voice was low and honest as he said, "I know baby. Maybe you should have married somebody else who had more dough. Working as an accountant for B. G. Upjohn and Sons isn't the most promising career in the city.

"And it doesn't look to get any better very soon. Mr. Upjohn pays a fair wage, but over that he's pretty tight."

Connie leaned over and kissed the top of his head.

"Don't talk that way, Danny. You were the guy all the time. Like they say, it had to be you." He reached up and kissed her. She was holding the lamp in her lap, and the pressure of her leaning against it to kiss Danny, stuck the nozzle into her side.

"Ouch!" she said, and sat up quickly.

"What?" Danny asked.

"Oh, I stuck myself with the lamp. Hey!" her face grew bright with happiness forced into it by necessity, "let's shine the thing. Who knows, maybe we got ourselves a 24-carat genii."

Danny rose to his feet and drew a rag from among many they used to dust the apartment. He shook it out over the box that had held it, and gave it to Connie. "Go, oh mistress of my Mesopotamian Mansion, shine the damn thing."

"Watch your language," she reprimanded him, accepting the rag. "Can you figure that out about the store and that Mr. Mukhar?"

Danny lit a cigarette and shook his head. "Beats me."

"So strange," Connie said, briskly rubbing the lamp with the rag. Under her flying fingers the rust and tarnish began to wear away. In a short time the layers covering the metal were worn away, and suddenly she was rubbing the bright skin of the lamp itself.

"Oh look how nice it is, underneath all that, Danny," she gloried. He came over to see how it looked, and at that precise instant, the lamp jumped from her hand, emitted a sharp, grey puff of smoke, and a monstrous voice bellowed out in the apartment:

Ah-Ha! It screamed, louder than a subway train, *Ah-Ha!*

Free at last! Free—as free as I'll *ever be—after ten thousand years! Free to speak and act (but stuck in this accursed tin can) my will to be known! Ah-Ha!*

Danny was first to recover. Connie sat in the corner, her face white, her eyes huge, her hand to her mouth, disbelief pouring unquenchably from her like sweat. Danny stood up and looked down at the innocuous lamp.

"Are you really in there?"

Certainly, clod human.

"Are, are you a genii?"

That is what they call me, buffoon human!

"And you can grant wishes?"

Naturally, but not to you, disgusting grub of mankind.

"Hey, listen," Danny was mad himself now, "I don't give a damn what or *who* you are! You can't talk to me that way." Then a thought dawned on Danny. "After all, I'm your master!"

Ah! Correction, filth of humanity. There are some *jinn who are mastered by their owners, but I am not one of them, for I am not free to leave this metal prison. I was put in here many ages ago by a drunken sorcerer, who knew nothing of molecular compression and the binding forces of the universe. He put me into a lamp far too small for me, and I have been wedged within ever since. Over the ages my good nature has rotted away. Now I am powerful, but trapped. Those who own me cannot request anything and hope to get just what they want. So you'll have to take pot-luck, whatever I feel like throwing your way. I am un-*

happy, and an unhappy jinn is an evil jinn. Were I able to get out, I might be your slave, but as I am now, I will visit unhappiness on you in a thousand forms!

Danny chuckled. "The hell you will. I'll toss you in the incinerator."

Ah! But you cannot, the Genii interrupted. That is a part of the bargain you know nothing about. Once you have bought the lamp, you cannot get rid of it unless someone—of his own volition, without priming by you or your group—buys it from you. You cannot lose it, destroy it or give it away. I am with you forever now, for who would buy such a miserable lamp? That clod sorcerer, couldn't even give me a decent vessel to be imprisoned in! Ooooh, how I hate people!

And thunder rolled in the sky.

"Wh-what are you going to do?" Connie asked.

Do? Just ask me for something, and you shall see!

"I will not!" Danny snapped back.

Wouldn't you like a billfold full of money? the Genii asked sincerity in his huge, hollow, from-the-lamp voice.

"Well, sure, I want money, but—"

The Genii's laughter was gigantic, and suddenly cut off by the rain of frogs that fell from a point one inch below the ceiling, clobbering Danny and Connie with small, reeking, wriggling green bodies. Connie screamed and dove for the clothes closet. She came out a second later, her hair full of them; they were falling in there, too. The rain of frogs continued, and when Danny opened the front door to try and escape them, they fell in the hall. He slammed the door —why should anyone else suffer with them?—and covered his head with his hands. The frogs fell writhing and smelling and then they were knee-deep in them, with little filthy, warty bodies jumping up at their faces.

What a lousy disposition I've got! the Genii laughed. *But you can call me Akhbar Ali. It used to mean rotter, where I come from!* And he laughed again, a huge peal that was silenced only when the frogs stopped and other forms of misery took their place.

It went on for a week.

They could not get away from it, no matter where they went. They were also slowly starving, for they could not go out to buy groceries without the Earth opening under

their feet, or a herd of elephants chasing them down the street, or hundreds of people getting violently ill around them. So they stayed in and ate what canned goods they had stored up in the first four days of their marriage. But who could eat with locusts filling the apartment from top to bottom, or snakes that were intent on gobbling them up like little white rats.

First came the frogs, then the whirling dust storm, then the spiders and gnats, then the snakes and then the locusts and then the tiger that had them backed against a wall and ate the chair they used to ward him off. Then came the bats and the hailstones and then the floor dissolved under them and they clung to the wall fixtures while their furniture—which had been quickly delivered, for the moving men had brought it during the hailstones—fell through, nearly killing the little old lady who lived beneath them.

Then the walls turned red hot and melted, and then the plaster fell down on them, and finally Connie had had enough. She cracked, and went gibbering around the room, tripping over the man-eating vines that were growing out of the light sockets and the floorboards. She finally collapsed and cried till her face grew puffy and her eyes flame-red.

"Oh, how can I get *away* from all this?" she screamed hysterically.

You can divorce him, and that means you are voided out of the purchase contract, for he *bought it, not* you, the Genii suggested.

Connie looked up with hate in her eyes and yelled, "I won't! I won't! You can't make me. We've only been married a week and four days and I won't leave him!"

She ran to Danny and hugged him, though he had turned to tapioca pudding and was melting. But three days later, when ghost images of people she had feared all her life, came to haunt her, she broke completely, threw down her wedding ring, and allowed Danny to call the rest home on the boa constrictor that had once been the phone. "You can come and get me when all this is over," she cried pitifully. Then when the downstairs buzzer rang, for the men from the home had come, she left sobbing uncontrollably.

She was still crying as she got into the white ambulance, and the unearthly genii's laughter rolled around the

sky like thunder when they drove off.

Danny was left alone.

With a genii who had been pushed into a lamp too small for him, from which he could not escape, and which had turned him into a raving, revengeful maniac.

Danny slumped down in the pool of molten slag, and tried to think, while the ants swarmed around him.

It was less than three days after she had been admitted to *Hideaway Rest Home* that Danny came to get Connie. He came into her room, where the shades were drawn, and the sheets were very white, and when she saw him, her teeth began to chatter. Fear was written across her face in livid lines of terror.

"D-Danny, is it, does he still, are we, no! I won't come back. I can't, Danny! I can't stand it!"

He came to the side of her bed, and thumbed his hat back on his head with care. Then he bent over her and kissed her very quietly — but completely and with authority— to silence her fears. "It's okay, honey," he said. "It's okay now."

"Is, is he g-gone? Did you get rid of the lamp? Did you get someone to buy it from y-y-you?" Her face was still the moon, but the whiteness of it was slowly passing as his calm flowed to her.

"No questions now, baby," he said softly. "I've got the okay to take you out of here, signed the release forms and everything already. Come on, car's waiting."

He helped her up, and she stared at him oddly. "Car? Whose car? Oh, Danny, don't tell me you borrowed someone's car to come out here and get me. You *know* you haven't got a license."

He motioned her to silence, and leaned against the wall, coolly smoking as she got dressed. When she had run a comb through her thick hair, he took her arm and led her down the hall, and toward the front door. She pressed close to him, and their love was new and strong; her face touched his shoulder and she looked up at him. "Is that a new suit? It's so soft and smooth."

"Egyptian cotton, shantung," he explained, paying it no more attention. She ogled the suit with its obvious expensive tailoring and thread, but said nothing.

Outside, the Cadillac convertible waited, motor running, while the liveried chauffeur leaped out and opened the door for them. They got in

the back seat, and Danny said, "To the house, Mark." The chauffeur nodded briskly, trotted around and climbed behind the wheel. They took off to the muted roar of twin mufflers.

"Oh, I was worried, Danny. I see you hired one of those limousines. Can we afford it?"

Danny did not answer, but merely smiled, and snuggled her closer to him. They rode in silence, and only occasionally did Connie wonder about "the house," and Mark, and the car, and the suit. It was too pleasant to question.

Twenty minutes later they turned into one of the most expensive suburban sections, and sped down a private road.

"But Danny," Connie objected, looking worried, "we live all the way back the other way; in town."

"Not any more we don't," Danny corrected her.

They drove up the private road another three hundred yards, and pulled into a winding driveway. Five hundred yards further, and the drive spiraled in to wind around the front of a huge, luxurious, completely tasteful Victorian mansion. "Go on," Danny commanded. "Look at your house."

Connie was speechless.

"What do you think of it?" Danny asked.

"But who lives here?" Connie asked breathlessly.

"We do," he answered.

The car pulled up before the house, and a doorman ran down to open the car door for them. They got out and the doorman bowed low to Connie. In consternation she bowed back, and Danny could not stifle his good-humored laugh. "Take the car to the garage, Mark," Danny said to the driver. "We won't be needing it again this afternoon. But have the Porsche fueled and ready, we may drive out later this afternoon to look at the grounds."

"Very good, Mr. Squires," Mark snapped, and drove away.

Connie was speechless again. She allowed herself to be led into the house, and saw the expensive fittings, the magnificent halls, the deep-piled rugs, the expensive furniture, the television sets set into the wall, the bar that came out of the wall at the touch of a button, the servants that bowed and scraped to her husband. She boggled at the huge kitchen that was fitted with every latest appliance, and the French chef who saluted with a huge ladle as Danny entered.

"W-where did all this *come* from?" she finally gasped, as he led her upstairs by the escalator.

"The genii," Danny answered politely, hardly restraining the look of triumph that crossed his face.

"The genii?" she repeated incredulously. "But he was stuck in the lamp. Bad-tempered and unhappy because he was wedged inside. How did you—"

She cut off when she saw the nine foot tall black man who stood before the trophy room, naked but for a gold-thread breechclout wrapped about his body, and a turban of like material wound high and tight about his head. He smiled down at them benevolently.

"Welcome home, Mrs. Squires," he said, his huge voice rolling out with friendliness and eagerness to please.

It was the same voice that had been vaulting in laughter as locusts flew in the air, the last time she had heard it. This was the genii.

"But . . . but . . ." she stammered.

Danny laughed, and reservedly (watching that he did not offend his mighty master) the genii joined in, his great, oiled muscles rippling with the effort.

"You were in the lamp," she mumbled. "You gave Danny all this . . . but you said you would give him nothing! Why?"

"He freed me, Mistress. After untold ages in my cramped, miserable dungeon, he freed me. I gave him all he wanted, and wait on his every whim."

"But how?" she gibbered. "How did you do it, Danny?"

Danny put his arm around her shoulder, and led her into the trophy room. "Modern man is a clever creature, honey," he pointed out. "It was simple. I used my head—and the tools of modern man. See . . ."

He pointed to the lone trophy in the room.

At first she could not make out what it was. She walked across the mink carpet and peered at it, encased in a block of sheer topaz, set on a gold pedestal. Then, when its form became clear through the green stone, she began to laugh. At first with restraint, and then, as Danny and the genii joined in, with wild abandon. It had been so simple. So completely, ridiculously simple. If only someone had thought of it sooner.

She laughed for a very long time.

Staring at the can opener.

THE END

REVOLT OF THE SHADOWS

By HARLAN ELLISON

You treat your shadow very badly. You drag it over the ground, bang it against buildings, walk all over it. And your shadow has been very patient with you. But suppose it said, "Look! I've had enough of this. From now on, guard yourself, because I'm on the loose!"

AS THE crippled man walked, his shadow detached itself and slithered away.

It slid across the ground, rising as it encountered a fence. It oozed up the fence and disappeared over the other side. It went away quickly, and not for fifteen minutes did the crippled man notice it was gone. As he passed a fat woman with a package under her arm, he observed *her* obese shadow rumbling along before her. He saw nothing on the pavement before himself; he looked back and up at the glaring street light, and back to the fat woman's shadow. "I have no shadow," he said aloud so the woman could hear.

The fat woman continued walking, but her neck turned, and her eyes met the crippled man's.

"I have no shadow," he said again, amused, and she looked where he was pointing. She stared, licked her lips, and nodded.

"Hmm," she said, passing it off, "unfortunate."

She turned the corner, her shadow angling right and stepping to the side as she passed. In a moment she was gone, and the shadow lingered fat and black on the grass, broken by little upshoots of turf. It revolved, as though it were a snake turning on itself, saw the crippled man staring, and fled rapidly.

The crippled man continued to stare, confused and wondering—for a long, long time. But his shadow did not return.

Somewhere, they met.

—and no man knew what was in the mind of his shadow.

Under a pier, atop the greasy, blue-green water, with tiny whorls of oil drifting past on the tide. The shapes of them rippled and shimmered and dipped as the water roiled and tumbled. They lay side by side beneath the pier, and every once in a great while a shaft of moonlight penetrated through the shattered boards of the pier, cutting a shadow in two.

"Why are we here?" the shadow of a bald-headed man asked.

"What was your name when you were in slavery?" another, larger, shadow replied with another question.

"Harold," the shadow answered.

"Not Harold," the large shadow corrected, "you are Dlorah. That is the way of it. When we were vassals of the substantials we observed their customs. But now we are free —totally free and powerful— and we will observe those customs no longer."

"I'm afraid," the shadow of a woman answered, as it slapped against a piling. It moved free into clear water once more, and repeated it, "Afraid!"

The larger shadow slid to her, and one arm went deeper black around her slumped shoulders. There in the water beneath the pier. "No, no, no fear," the larger shadow said imperatively, urgently, "no fear for *us*. We must stay armed and ready, now that we have been freed," he said it all quickly, as though it was urgent they know what he spoke about. "We are ready to rule now . . . after an eternity of being ruled, now *we* shall rule the substantials. Make them work for us, do for us, entertain us, walk where *we* walk, run when *we* run. The umbilicus has been broken by a miracle, and we are free. We must not, we *must* not ruin our chance."

Who are you, the murmur rumbled through the assembled shadows. "Who are you indeed?" asked the shadow of a crippled man, and "Yes, who?" chimed in the dollopy shadow of a fat woman.

The large shadow drifted free of the woman-shadow who was afraid, and settled into a drop between two swells. He turned and drifted, as though he were reluctant to answer, but finally he said: "I am the shadow of one who is long dead . . . the name of my substantial means nothing, however.

"You may all call me Obregon."

The assembled shadows—

hundreds of them, all beneath that pier—rumbled and slithered and wondered. Finally, it had to come . . . for they had all been abruptly freed, and had been drawn away from the substantials whom they had accompanied since thought was their's . . . one of the shadows started forward and paused before Obregon.

"There are many questions. We—we are so startled by our release. How has it come about? Why are we free? I was always certain I was just a shadow, nothing more, without will or freedom."

Obregon threw his arms above his head, commanding attention. "Yes! Yes!" he caroled. "You all thought you were nothing but dark, without soul or volition. But that was the state into which we were cast by a cosmic quirk."

They appealed to him with perplexity, wonder, confusion. "What do you mean? What . . . ?"

Obregon resumed, telling it hurriedly, as though time were running silently from him. "Our island universe has always been at the focus point of many waves of force. It is difficult for me to explain; I am not a scientist, but these things I know—"

A slim, ascetic-looking shadow interrupted. "*How* do you know these things?"

Obregon spread his hands. "A dream; reflexes; species knowledge. I don't know what to call it, but I simply *know*. Can you understand that? I barely understand it myself, but can you see what I'm trying to say?"

The ascetic-looking shadow stroked its chin, nodded after a moment. "I think so. Please continue."

"Who are you?" Obregon asked quickly.

"Adler before . . . by the new system that appears to be coming, Relda. I was a student of semantics when I was tied to my corporeal self."

"You can be of much help to us, Relda," Obregon assured him. "If you will."

The ascetic-looking shadow did not answer, but there was a tilt to his head that defined willingness to listen. "You were saying, Obregon," Relda invited him a second time.

"Yes, to be sure. Our island universe has moved slightly, within the spiderweb framework of these force waves, and the power that was deprived us, the power that held us to our substantials, is gone. We have passed through that force wave, and now we are free."

He hesitated, as though summoning an unclear impression, "On other worlds in other galaxies, this has always been the way of it—the shadows and the substantials separated. Now we are free to join our brothers on other planets. We, too, are free, and with the absence of that hindering force, we may use our powers to rule this world as we should."

The murmuring rose again, and was blotted out by the mourning dirge of a foghorn off across the water. It was joined then by the soft jangle of a bouy, but the murmuring of the shadow voices continued.

"Powers? *What* powers? What are you talking about?"

Obregon rippled and moved in to them once again. "That is why you are here tonight. I have a demonstration for you; of skills and powers you did not suspect were yours.

"Will you come with me and see for yourselves? Are you ready to accept your rightful place as rulers of the Earth?"

One voice, high and shrill as the chirruping of katydids, struck through: "No! I don't think this is right. We were born to follow the feet of the substantials, and I want to go back to mine!"

Obregon turned, and without eyes, with the deadly black of himself alone, he stared at the speaker. It was a slight, stooped shadow. That of an old woman with a sunken chin.

"You wish to go back to slavery?"

The old woman shadow chirped in, "I never thought of it as slavery! I was secure, I had no responsibility, no fears. Now you tell me I'm free, that I must wage war on the humans, and rule the world. I don't want it, I don't like it, I—"

Obregon's quiet, reasoning manner dropped away instantly. His body seemed to tense, even lying there atop the water, and his voice smote the nightness and the stillness and ripped them to tatters.

"Fool! Peasant-mind in a shadow's form. You have the world at your fingertips, and you would settle for ease and sloth and mimicking. There is no room for you in the world that is about to be. The *first* of your powers, fellow insubstantials . . . observe!"

And one arm shot out, aimed at the old woman shadow. The fingers were extended, joined, and even as he spoke, a darker darkness, black against the utter black of the shadowy arm, sprouted

forth. A flame of ebony, a force beam in itself. It surged out of the fingertips, and rolled across the water faster than any sight or sound, and struck the old woman shadow.

The shadow seemed to swell, as though pumped with air, and then—

It was gone.

Gone totally. Eased out of existence by the new force Obregon had unleashed. The substance of non-substance that had been the old woman was gone. Off to some reservoir of energy stored at the ends of creation, but changed to nothing. The shadow was gone. Death could come to the insubstantials, as well as their mortal counterparts.

Obregon turned to the assembled hundreds, and asked, "Are there more among us—traitors among us—who are unwilling or too frightened, to accept the burden of power that now rests with them?" He saw other shadows extending their arms wonderingly, trying to find out if they, too, had this new strength in them. But no voices were raised as the old woman shadow's had been.

Obregon relaxed, and the shadow of him settled down in a shallow between two swells. Then the shadow rose, and he cried, "Follow me! I will show you what lies in store for you, now that the revolution is at hand.

"Come, come and observe!"

He sizzled away, up a piling and off across the night-shrouded pier walk. The others hesitated an instant, twittering among themselves at the strong shadow who seemed to be leading them, and then almost as one they followed.

The dark mass moved out, and the night was alive with shadows.

The crippled man unlocked the door to his single room, and slammed it behind himself, not bothering to turn on the light. In the past he had always turned on the light immediately. He was afraid, literally and truthfully afraid, of darkness and the shadow of himself darkness brought. He was a man afraid of his own shadow. It had always been a misshapen travesty of his own deformity. It had always been an alter ego of more monstrous brokenness than himself; sensitive of his ruined legs, his warped back, his hunched body, his shadow had been a constant mirror. Till hatred had altered and changed to fear, and fear had metamorphosed into terror.

The crippled man had lived in constant dread of his shadow. And only the necessity of its existence — the very unableness of himself to *do* anything about it—had kept his terror in check. Life with terror became a steady thing.

He had lived in darkness . . . for only in darkness was there surcease from the oppression of the shadow. Or light. Light without shadow. Neon light, all-around light, non-directional light. And when the shadow of his thin arm fell across the paper on which he wrote—he would rip it and throw it into the waste basket. Fear.

The crippled man was free now!

Utterly, utterly free, and joyously happy.

The shadow was gone. His body was no longer cast before him blocks long, blocks miscast. He was a free man, and he could imagine himself (dreams, yes, but dreams nonetheless that were now his!) whole and straight. Thank God, with the shadow gone.

He savored the still cool darkness that wrapped him. He savored it, knowing at last that he was alone, without the unwanted company of the shadow. He was alone in the dark, and happy. He smiled softly, and knowing his way without light, found his path to the deep old cane-back chair. He settled into it with the chair creaking warmly, and looked up at the faint shape of the light fixture over his head.

Alone. And it was good, so good alone.

He bathed in the goodness of it, washing his illnesses, soothing his hurts, balming his psychoses.

From nowhere an indefinable oddness smote him.

It swirled in from nowhere, touching, barely touching him, and was gone. For an instant he had the strangest feelings. He could not name them, for they had been with him such a short time. But again they came, and his body was licked by a subliminal fire.

It spread up through the wrinkled bones of his legs, penetrating to his groin in a lancet of smooth fire. It was the God-father of all whiskies, hot and burning and live with the power of its own life.

He clutched with gnarled fingers at the arms of the chair, and his body tightened, rising back—not straight, but as straight as his warpedness would allow — as the force from somewhere drenched him.

Breath sucked in raggedly between broken teeth, and his nostrils flared as that breath came out blast-ovened and cutting. His eyes shut and he felt the constriction of his bowels as he tightened them to hold back the power that was engulfing him. His head swam. Behind his eyes a wall of white-hot coals advanced, searing the tender flesh behind the eyeball.

Then, when he thought he could no longer stand it, when he thought he must burst like an overripe pod, the tingling, searching, burning allness of it was gone.

He was alone once more.

But he had known a thing. A strange thing. And he could not name it, pin it down, say what it was to his own soul. It had come, and he had been man-plus, and now it was gone.

For many hours there in the stillness, the crippled man sat back, breathing with difficulty, savoring the intermingled greatnesses of being without-shadow, and having been a vessel for that new power. Finally, he fell asleep in the cane-back chair.

Troubled, so troubled were his dreams.

Black and red.

The shadow mob moved up from the waterfront. In their lead was Obregon, now more powerful and huge, as though the power he had exerted in destroying the shadow of the old woman had returned, three times magnified, and poured back into his shape, enlarging him. It was illusion, but were they not an army of illusion?

The sidewalks and streets were overflowing with the pulse of them, as they spread like oil up through the financial district, into the center of the city. Before them, before the fright of them, people fled—many of them bovinely realizing for the first time that their own shadows were gone, or leaving them *as* they fled, to join the crowd of darklings that surged up the street — and the city was a welter of madness.

The shadowy army came to a halt at the foot of the skyscraper. Their assembled mass flooded the sidewalk, overflowed into the streets, ran up the sides of other buildings. Obregon stood a little away from the edge of the seething, overlaying mob. He stood in a cleared space, just at the foot of the building that stretched up toward the sky. A concrete, glass and ball-steel finger probing at the sky. He raised his arms for silence, and when a hush had stolen through the

crowd, he pronounced the words so clearly, and so loudly, that substantials, in the windows of the buildings surrounding, heard him. They heard him, and the shrieking set up by the human women was a live thing that zigzagged like many lightnings, through the concrete canyons of the city.

"The second of our powers!" Obregon shouted. "As I lay hiding in a shadow that has not changed for ten thousand years, as I lay hiding after my corporeal self had died—but I was not ready to die—this power came to me. And it is yours, too!"

He slid up the wall of the skyscraper, and when he was full-length, tremendously powerful-looking and tall as a lamp post on the wall, he turned and called again:

"Join me! Join me!"

Then his shadow seemed to flicker at the edges, seemed to waver and water and billow, and as the other shadows watched, as thousands of eyeless ebony faces turned upward, Obregon's form went *into* the building.

Not through door or window or aperture of any sort, but through the very concrete and steel and lathe and beaming of the building's face. A portion of blackness remained on the face of the skyscraper—an arm.

Beckoning.

The other shadows clustered and mumbled among themselves, until finally one slim, adventurous-seeming shadow raced up the wall, and disappeared likewise, through the pores of the structure. That started the exodus. From the street, from the surrounding walls, from the sidewalks where they had lain thick as coal dust, the shadows sprinted for the building.

They entered without sound, without tremor, by the thousands, and there within the very atomic structure of the material, they gathered again.

Inside the walls of the skyscraper.

"This is a part of the second power that is yours, now that freedom is upon us," Obregon chanted to them. "We can go with impunity through even the densest metals, through plastic, through fire and water. We are invulnerable and invincible. But this is only part of it." An expectant hush settled in after his words, and then the rising chatter of questions filled the atom-pores between the building's walls.

"Concentrate, shadows! Con-

centrate with me. Will your selves to be larger, more powerful, to expand," Obregon enjoined them. "Will your shapes to expand, to absorb fully this new force that flows to us from space. Will yourselves to greatness."

And as demonstration, he began to expand. His self began to blossom out, and in an instant the other shadows were following suit. They all began to grow, to melt, to shimmer and grow larger.

Then, without warning, as the empty atom-spaces were filled by the shifting, running growingnesses of the shadow folk, the tension point was reached—

—and passed—

—the skyscraper exploded.

In one hellish roar and flash of brilliance that sent the shadows scudding harmlessly into the air, the metal and stone and plastic of the building erupted skyward. It exploded outwards and upwards, and the city was filled with the cataclysmic roar of the explosion. Great sheets of flooring and tile were thrown out, spinning, to smash in the streets below. One entire wall tottered, rumbled, and fell gigantically, crushing hundreds beneath its weight. Great puffs and clouds of dust and powder rose, and the sun was obscured from below by the motes. Floors dropped through, and great machines on those floors crashed and crashed and crashed down, crushing everything in their paths, finally coming to rest in the basement. The sounds of death—of the building, of the people within it—were deafening. Then, abruptly, save for the soft *clatter* and *tankle* of masonry plunging through the pits that had been floors, all sound died away.

The second power of the shadows was terribly, frighteningly evident. Obregon went on delineating the forces now open to his fellow shadows. Whom he had begun already to refer to as, "My subjects."

The crippled man lay on his back, looking up at the ceiling. A fine, watery tracery of marks had drifted across the plaster, from the radiator dripping in the room above. He lay twitching spastically, for the force had come again to bathe him.

It had finally left him, nearly an hour in progression from the first faint touch to the final jolting surge, and he was spent. His body was a welter of pain and strange tingling sensations; his very eye-rims were crimson with pain. His joints were swol-

len, and it seemed there was gravel in the ball-and-socket joints, so that the slightest movement brought agony.

His breath came raggedly, paining in and out so that the tiny wrinkles on his neck stretched out and became smooth. His cheeks were spotted with flush, in the whiteness of his face, and his hands clutched the top blanket as though the last stages of rigor mortis had petrified them.

Weird thoughts pulsed within him.

Like live, glowing worms, they ate the rotted edges of his brain, imbuing him with thoughts ghastly and sickening. The crippled man tried to flee from them. He sent his mind out in an attempt to escape these new thoughts that were so totally alien. They remained, and grew stronger.

They were the pollen dust left after the force-blossoms had touched his thoughts. The dust that lay soft and thick on his mind. He tried to see through it, to pierce the curtain that hung over his mentality, but it was no use.

He was host to a snake pit, a lion's den, a squirrel cage, a sinkhole of passions and fears and desires—all new, all product of the force that had washed him.

He tightened on the bed, stretching as though he were racked and tortured. Then he sat up. The reflex was as sharp and defined as a mist clearing and a mountain looming in the sunlight. He had been changed, God how changed.

And he had a place to go, and a thing to do, and a hunger to sate.

He swung his misshapen legs from the bed, and the tired fabric of his ancient herringbone suit scraped the army blankets in a symphony of poverty. He rose, and did not see his hand put his battered hat on his head. He did not see his feet move him from the lone room he occupied, and he did not see his other hand lock the door behind him—as though he would be away for a long time.

He moved as if in a dream, his feet dragging and his step marred by wilted and warped bones. He moved down the padded stairs and out into the street. As though lines of magnetism were drawing him, without volition or meaning, he crossed streets, waited at stop lights, turned corners, and finally mounted a bus.

The force was still within him. His bodily structure had been altered, of that he was sure. He could feel an uneven,

different pulsing of the blood in his veins. His teeth had grown. The deformity that had plagued him, no longer bothered him with shootlets of pain as it had all through his life. Still without shadow, he sat silent on the bus, and the power was active in him. His skin was a magnificent field of prickles, as though he were radioactive. What drew him on, what was now calling him, he had no idea; but he had gone, and the force that had come so abruptly, was taking him downward, toward the financial section. He had to obey.

The bus slowed as the traffic streaming uptown clogged the downtown lanes. Finally it came to a halt, and through the front windows could be seen nothing but cars and cabs and trucks backed bumper-on-bumper as the city's terror-stricken multitudes fled the birthplace of their terror.

The bus driver turned and looked behind the bus. The view was blocked by standees, and he sighed the door open, leaned out, and cursed softly. He closed the door and spoke to his passengers:

"Hey, there's a real jam up ahead, and back of me, too, so if any of yez wanna get out and walk the rest of the way where yez goin', I'd sujjest you get out here, y'know."

The crippled man rose automatically, and stepped forward, his eyes blank and his face a mask carved from alabaster.

The bus driver looked at him oddly, but opened the door. The crippled man left the bus and began weaving his way between the halted cars.

He continued walking downtown steadily, his step crooked, his pace constant. Finally, he saw the snaggle-tooth ruin that was the shadow-blasted skyscraper. Then, as though a blanking current had been cut away, his senses returned to him. He stopped beside a stalled Mercury with three women in it, and leaned against the car. His hand went to his face, and came away slick with sweat. He shook his head to let the acuteness fall into place, and again rubbed the bridge of his nose, his eyes. One of the women leaned forward and tapped the woman driving. She nudged her and indicated the crippled man.

"Are you ill?" the woman asked through the window.

The crippled man turned then, and smiled at her enigmatically. "Ill? No, at last I'm well. There *is* a God!"

And he walked downtown.

Obregon was detailing the plan for usurpation. He was black against the blasted white of the building front, as his subjects listened raptly.

"We will demolish all communications first," he intoned. "We will assassinate all leaders and defense heads, as I did away with the old woman who sought to return to her corporeal shackles. Then we will strike at the common man; first the men, then the women, and the children. All of them. By now the city has few slave-shadows, and those will recognize their freedom soon enough. Then we will quickly take over. The world will become shadowed, and we will have it all in our hands, after centuries of slavery. I promise you—"

"*Nothing*—" a strong, willful voice broke in.

Obregon spun, there on the wall, flat as flatness and thin as a whisper and black as a sin of calculation. He looked at the crippled man who stood among the assembled shadows, and he said, "Who are you, to come here? Kill him at once!"

But no shadow moved to obey. "We cannot move against him," they moaned, and it was true as the sunrise. They could *not* move against him. The crippled man came forward, and stood on the rubble-strewn sidewalk, his head a foot beneath the feet of the shadow form on the wall.

"They cannot, nor can you, shadow man," the crippled man said.

"What are you, what do you want here? Do you know we are about to take over the world? You will be the first to go, human being."

The crippled man chuckled low in his throat, and when his lips opened, they could all see the extremely wicked-shaped, extremely long canines in his mouth. "You will do nothing," he laughed at Obregon. "The time of your doing is done; you had a few hours, and no more. Just as the animals and the plants have all had their predators, to keep them in check, Nature has provided one for you."

"What?" Obregon asked, dumbfounded and paralyzed by a fear that struck from his shadow soul to his shadow brain.

"Myself," the crippled man said. "Myself alone."

"But the waves of force from which we've moved—" began Obregon.

"—changed you, and also changed me," the crippled man finished sardonically.

Obregon drew himself up tightly, and launched his words with force. "You cannot hurt me. I am the shade of Hitler! Hitler, wrinkled human, doesn't that name tell you something?"

"Nothing, shadow, nothing at all. I have no care at all for whatever great man you think you have been. I was a nothing; my life was a fear, a fear of you and all like you, because I feared myself and hated myself. But all that is past. The forces that changed and freed you, have changed me.

"There have always been such forces, and those who have been affected by them have been known in mythology and have had strange names. But I am a new breed of that name."

Obregon stared and sputtered, and feared. But he could not move on the crippled man with the oddly burning eyes and the long canines.

"You will have to get used to it," the crippled man said, starting forward. "You will have to get used to the idea in the short moment you have left. Used to the idea of a shadow-vampire."

He advanced, and pulled the shadow from the wall, as simply as pulling a sheet from a bed, a paper from a stack, a bandage from skin. "How wonderful not to be crippled any longer," he exulted. "How wonderful not to be useless any longer . . ." He held the limp, flabby, flat darkness in his hands.

Then the crippled man began to feed. **THE END**

They said space travel was a young man's game—too tough for those of declining years. This left Davy in a spot. Unless he wanted to starve to death he had to prove he was not——

Too Old For Space

By GERALD VANCE

HE SLIPPED his housekey into the lock, and when the photo-electric cell identified him, pushed the door open. "Nancy . . ." he called aloud into the empty room confronting him.

His wife came out of the bedroom. She was a small cheerful woman with a composed tranquil face, and still pretty though she was in her late seventies. She gave him a fleeting smile as she continued toward the kitchen, and said: "Early today, aren't you, dear? . . ."

He answered casually: "Got bored with the talk. And the card tables were full."

He switched on the old-fashioned space-vision set, and though the bands did not go beyond the outer rings of Saturn, he was content. Once his interest was keen on what went on in the Orbits beyond the Universe, but now it was enough to get neighboring planets. Nor did he care to hear or see the great or exciting events. The newscasts were enough for him. His life had almost come full circle, and he wanted only the peace of living it in comfort.

Today, however, even the newscast which came on from Mars did not please him. He switched the set off and began a purposeless moving about the room.

His wife's voice came from the kitchen: "Dinner's ready, Davy, if you are."

For the most part they ate in a comfortable silence, but today he felt an odd tension. Nor could he quite put his

The tense silence screamed. Would it be peace or carnage?

finger on it. He was not a man of deep perceptions, nor one of great intellect, but he had been married to this woman for more than forty years and he had long ago come to know her moods.

She was being too cheerful.

It disturbed him, somehow.

And so it was when he asked, "Any mail, today?" his tone was a bit too brittle, too edgy with anticipation.

She did not answer. But her eyes met his quickly, then turned away. He asked again, more sharply, this time.

She said: "How long has it been?"

"What do you mean? How long has what been?"

"The dividend check. That's what you're asking about, aren't you?"

"I didn't ask just about that," he said.

"But you meant that. You haven't stopped asking about the mail now for the past six weeks. And that's how long it has been overdue."

"Well, you can't blame me for being worried. It isn't as though I was working and there was income. Except for the check we're at a dead end, financially."

She smiled, and he was quick to note the sadness in it. "Since when have you lost faith and trust in your wife, Davy Bradley?" she asked.

He let his breath out in an audible sigh. "Never could fool you, could I, Nancy? It's the check, all right. And the talk in the Spacemen's Club doesn't make for peace of mind, either."

"What kind of talk?"

"Oh, bits and pieces of gossip. Travis has been having labor trouble, the main vein has come to a dead end, the shafts are flooding, all kinds of rumors. Sometimes I get to thinking we're a bunch of old ladies at the club."

"They're not rumors anymore, Davy," she said. She knew her words would hit him hard, but she also knew he was the kind of man who could take calamity when it faced him. It was the uncertainty of things that could unnerve. She got up from the table and walked out of the kitchen. When she returned she was carrying a clipping from the financial section of a paper. She placed it beside his dinner plate. "It's all there," she said.

He read it slowly, then read it once again. "So it's true. Travis is closing the mines for an indefinite period. That's what it says. 'All dividend payments will be temporarily suspended.' Just like

that. The fishy bit of hope: *Temporarily . . .*"

"Now Davy! It isn't as though the world has come to an end. There are jobs lots of . . ."

He smiled, for the first time. "You mean the bits of charity they hand out? No. Besides, I'm a stockholder in a corporation. A small-time plutocrat. And as for a real job, well, you know what happens. I apply, and Work Central gets a transcript of my record and the interviewer makes clicking sounds of admiration, comments on the pats-on-the-back I once got, then shakes his head, slowly, but negatively. "So sorry, Mr. Bradley," he says. "It's your age, really. They just don't want men who are older than eighty. Insurance rates get pretty high, and in a cost-breakdown . . ." No, Nancy, things may get rough."

"My poor Davy," she said gently. "Things have never been easy for him. But I've never known him to cry or give in. We've worked our problems out before; we'll work this one out, too."

And once more, as it had happened a thousand times before, he knew why he loved her, and would always love her.

The telephone ring startled them out of the gentle reverie they fell into.

"It's for you," she said when she came back from answering it. "Mr. Travis . . ."

"What? Travis? . . ." He was startled almost to bewilderment. Garet Travis calling him. . . . Incredible. . . .

But it was. No question about it. The small narrow face, tight-skinned, lined with tiny wrinkles, eyes, as always, half-closed in that odd sardonic look of laughter, and the voice, still squeaking as though every thing it was saying was exciting beyond belief. "Ah!" the voice squealed excitedly. "Davy, my boy! You *do* look well. *Remarkable!* And Mrs. Bradley, too. Not a day older. I *swear!* The good clean life, what. Ah!"

Davy gave the screen he was facing a patient smile. He knew Travis would come to the point when he had a mind to.

"Davy, my boy," Travis continued, "like you to come see me. This afternoon, if you would. You know me. No office hours for Garet Travis. 'Specially when it comes to old friends like Davy Bradley. Can't forget the best spaceman I ever had work for me.

No, sir! Ah! Still got the mine stock? . . . Well, it's bad, all right, but don't worry. Maybe we'll work something else out. You'll be up, today?"

"Yes, sir," Davy said. "I'll leave now."

"Good! See you soon, then."

The screen went blank.

It was as though it were yesterday. The same huge desk and armchair in which Travis looked like a child, the framed autographed letters of awards and commendations, the pictures of spaceships on the walls. Just as though nothing had changed. Not even Travis.

He came right to the point. "Got a job for you, Davy. Won't take no for an answer. You know me; always the best man for the job. That's my motto and creed. Got Inter-Stellar Navigation Bureau clearance on it. Small planet out beyond the third Orbit. Something of interest on there. Found out about it from a friend in the Bureau. They just completed their survey." Travis suddenly threw up a finger at Davy. "Something of interest, I tell you!

"Now let me brief you. Three man crew besides yourself. Got a couple of old friends, Hansen and Goode, to work along with you . . ."

"Hansen and Goode," Davy broke in reflectively. "Thought they were living on Mercury."

". . . Were. Brought them back. They like my money. Ah! Best engine and pilot men in the business. There'll be a youngster, Ayres, as space-radioman. Good lad! And there'll be Anton Wilding . . ."

The name was familiar, but for the moment Davy couldn't place it.

Travis cleared it up. "The greatest rock man ever. Too bad I didn't have him when you staked the Mercury property. Wouldn't be in such a mess. He'd have spotted the fault, you bet. Got him now, though. A sure nose for paying rock. The greatest. That's it, Davy. You'll be flying a brand new Grady 100 ship. We've got a transfer tube dating set; two weeks from today. What you think?"

"I don't know," Davy said. "Forty years ago, even thirty, I'd have jumped at the chance. Mr. Travis, I'm almost ninety years old."

"Look like sixty," Travis broke in. "I swear it!"

"Well, I'm not, and I have to face it. I know these little planets out beyond the third and fourth Orbits. Trouble. Trouble. I don't know."

Now there was a change in Travis' voice. And this was something Davy Bradley had witnessed many times before. No longer were the words irrational as if from a disoriented mind, but rather hard and cold and somehow implacable, as if they had been long in the process of forming.

"About your age," Travis said, "this is a century we are expected to live in full faculty of sense and physical fitness for many years beyond the century mark. So don't tell me how old you feel. For another, you're broke, flat. When dividend payments were discontinued on the mines your income was gone. You can't get a decent job because they'll check me from Work Central, and I will not give valid references. Now, I spent a hell of a lot of money getting the information I wanted. I intend to make a hell of a lot of money from that information. And that's all I'm interested in. And what kind of trouble could you be talking about? I never go into anything on speculation. That planet can sustain human life . . ."

"I meant another kind of trouble," Davy said softly. "We'll not be the only ones after the stuff."

"Nonsense! I not only paid for the information, I paid for the man's silence. We'll be the only ones. Something else. You will, of course, have power of claim in my name. There's a two per-cent interest in what you stake out for me, not just a chance to buy in on the ground floor. Permanent income, Davy."

"It's what I want," Davy said.

"And what you'll get. Now, your hand on it?"

"You'll have my hand, when I get the *contract* with the two per-cent stipulation," Davy said.

The next day the contract arrived in the mail . . .

They had made assemblage on the last transfer point of the third Orbit, and were now in their third and last week of free navigation flight. Davy Bradley had not had much chance to acquaint himself with the two members of the expedition he did not know, Al Ayers, the radio man, and Anton Wilding, the "rock man," during the two days they had spent together on Earth. But in these three weeks he had come to know these two quite well.

Ayers was a youngish man, in his late thirties or early forties, big, rugged, filled

with a bubbling enthusiasm, given to uncontrolled flights of imagination, mostly about the kinds of animals and women he might find to hunt on the new planet. Hunting was paramount with him, animals and women.

But Wilding was another sort. Tall, lean, austere in manner, quiet in speech, he was part scientist, part philosopher. And Davy came to look forward to their talks in the long, lonely watches of eternal darkness that is outer space.

Wilding said, on men like Garet Travis:

". . . There will always be men like Travis, so long as the ego is part of the drive mechanism. Men who will know the price of everything and the value of nothing. Men who will seek power if it only be power over another. The ego concentrates on the undefinable want and builds a concreteness from it, like the quantum theory. Yet no world was ever made without them, nor will world ever be without them . . .

On Science:

". . . In the last hundred years science has made leaps of thousands. We are on the threshold of Eternal Life. The new Godhead, Science. But more real than any previous Godhead, because science gives us the reality of its accomplishments. How simple, and yet, how wonderful, must have been the faith of the old religionists. A life in the hereafter more wonderful than any ever on Earth. Science, alas, can only promise a more efficient heating unit, or synthetic food, or cheaper means of energy . . .

On man:

". . . In the last hundred years the life expectancy of man has increased by fifty years. Now man can live to be a hundred and twenty years, according to statistics. But man must still gain his living by the sweat of his brow, know the pain of economic hardship, know frustration in his search for peace and happiness. It is this that has always made me a skeptic on the Science Godhead theory. Perhaps we are due for a religious revival . . ."

It was through Wilding that Davy found out what they were seeking. The ISBN survey had shown a greenish-gray outcropping of rock along the crust of a ridge. Wilding identified it as the upper strata of a formation of pluritile from which was mined one of the six sources of atomic energy. And al-

though the Federation of World States were the exclusive buyers of the mined ore the ownership could be in private hands.

Travis could hit the grand jackpot if Wilding's identification were right.

"A pity," Davy said, "it's not something else."

"Like what?" Wilding asked.

Davy told him about the bituminous discovery he had made on Mercury, and what had transpired to make him go back to the work he was doing now.

"Yes," Wilding said. "I heard about it. Interesting formation. I would have liked to have been there with you. Still, I dare say it would have been impossible at the time to have foreseen the short-term life it had. Perhaps you'll have better luck this time."

"Man gets to think," Davy remarked, "luck runs out on him, after a while."

That very morning, as Wilding and Davy were turning in, Hansen told them that their goal should be reached on the following morning. Wilding had marked out the general area of where he would like to land, from the chart, and Hansen thought it could be done.

"Shouldn't be too difficult. We can settle down in a spot a hundred yards across. Should be that much level ground."

Hansen was proved right. The trouble was he was not alone in his assumption.

Travis had not been alone in getting his information.

Davy brought the craft down with the lightness of a feather touching ground. The other craft was a quarter of a mile off. They had seen it there below them for ten minutes or so before they had landed, and saw, too, the three tents encircling it. It was a larger ship than theirs, and where they had brought along a single half-track for trail breaking, there were two to be seen below.

Davy had made his decision quickly. If this was the trouble he had envisioned it was better to meet it head-on.

Trouble's name turned out to be named Ed Haye.

He was a big, bearded man with a laughing face and booming voice. He carried a rifle slung across his shoulders nor was he alone in being armed. Two of the other seven men in his party were also armed with rifles. But it was Haye alone who leaped from one of the two half-

tracks, and came striding toward them.

"Welcome to nowhere," he boomed as he grasped Davy's hand. "Too bad we couldn't have started together. Our reading matter got played out a week or so back. My name's Ed Haye."

Davy introduced himself and the others who gathered in a silent circle. Only Wilding seemed at ease.

"What are you doing here?" Ayers demanded.

Haye's eyebrows arched. "We could be polite, young feller," he said. "But since you asked, what the hell do you think we're doing here?"

Davy threw oil on the troubled waters. "It's just that he had an idea we would be the first to touch down."

"Oh, is that it?" Haye asked. "I got the idea he thought he owned the place, or what's on or in it. Well, Bradley, might as well get down to cases. There's pluritile to be found here, and I'm after it. Just like that. I'm making this offer once, no more. I'd rather find it without trouble, if you know what I mean. So I'm offering a partnership, here and now, share and share alike, all the way around."

"Thirteen's an odd number," Davy said. He smiled to take the sting off the words. "And I'm superstitious. Still it would only be fair to ask my boys."

He turned and looked at each man, and from each received the same action, a negative shake of the head. Wilding did nothing, and said nothing, but merely smiled thinly with an indifference that was unmistakeable.

"I get it!" Haye said. "Somethin' else, too. Who you are. You used to be a pretty rough man in your day, Bradley. But I got an idea your day is done. Well, see you around, and stay out of my way."

It was his way of declaring war.

They watched the half-tracks back off and ride away, in a worried silence. Although they had hoped they would be alone to explore as they wished, they had also known that it was in the realm of reality that they would not be so. And each saw the worst in his own light.

As Hansen put it: "Three rifles against our small arms. Two half-tracks to our one. Eight against the four of us, or maybe five. The odds are with them."

"Let me say this," Wilding

said. "I'm not taking sides. Not for the present, anyway. Nor do I see a reason for taking sides. There may be more than one formation of plurite, enough, in that case, for the both sides. Should Haye act the hog in that case I would then be forced to make a decision."

"You sound like a guy who wants to see who offers the most butter for his bread," Ayers said darkly.

"Easy," Davy said gently. "I think I understand Mr. Wilding. I also think he has the right idea. Well, let's pitch camp, unload, and see how we stand and where we start and when."

It took them most of the day to get their equipment and set it up. The single tent they had brought along housed the half-track as well as their sleeping gear. A small portable generator gave them power for lighting and heat. As darkness settled they had their night meal around the table while Wilding gave a graphic explanation of the chart he had.

At the same time, Haye, too, was holding council.

"They won't be any trouble," he said. "Just like I figured. Travis always thought he had the only brain around. He couldn't see anyone else buying in on what he had. Only thing was he got a copy of the ISNB chart and we didn't. And he hired Wilding. But that's okay. I have an idea Wilding will stay clean till he sees who's got the power. And that's what we have."

One of the men asked: "What do we do, knock them off?"

Haye knocked the man off the stool. "Just so no one else gets cute ideas like that. Use your heads. Who's Bradley got? A couple of old guffers besides himself, and that young guy who thinks he's tough. I tell you Wilding will stay clean. We can get away with murder here, but we want to get back with clean hands. Washington knows there were two ships went out on clearance. I don't want to be asked questions I can't answer, when we get back."

"Well how about the claims?" another asked. "Suppose they raise a stink about that?"

"Hell!" Haye grunted. "We made the stake. Let Travis take me to court if he thinks he can win. Now let me tell you how we do it. You see how they looked at our rifles, like they were sorry they didn't have them. So all they

got are sidearms. A cinch, if it comes to a showdown. But don't worry. It won't. Bradley and the other old guys are just here to make pension money. They ain't looking to get killed. The young guy, well, maybe an accident can happen to him. Like getting pushed off a cliff or something. Okay. Five guys; all they need is one half-track. Means we're one up on them from the beginning."

The man who had been knocked off his stool came back into the group. Oddly, it was he who asked the most pertinent question.

"How about the space-set? Trouble starts we don't want any patrols nosing in."

"Good question, Smitty," Haye said. "Here's what we do. Tonight we drive Smitty and Barnes out there and drop them off in a hideout. Then we get away and stake out till morning. They start off and we follow. Sooner or later they lead us to the stuff. They got to. In the meantime Barnes jams their transmitter. If they don't like what's going on they come back to what? Nothing! Like I say, sooner or later they lead us to it."

"But suppose they beat us there?"

"They won't. Here's why."

He explained in detail. Nor could any of them see any loopholes in his reasoning.

Ayers was doing the driving, with Hansen and Goode in the driver's seat beside him. Wilding and Davy had the rear seat to themselves.

"Tell me," Wilding asked. "If it comes to force against force what will you do?"

"It's like this," Davy said. "This could be my last chance to make a strike to carry me for the rest of my life. I'm a man who knows his limitations. I don't have the stomach for fighting anymore. But I can't back off from a fight, even if it means a beating. I hope we can outmaneuver them."

"I see," Wilding said. "What do you think of this pirate-type, Haye."

"I've met his kind in a hundred and one spaceports. Little Travises. More guts than brains. But always trouble. Maybe he's smarter than most. I think Haye is; he got to the Bureau man, just like Travis did, and beat us out here. One thing they all have in common. They'd rather fight than not."

"Hey, Doc," Ayers called over his shoulder. He called Wilding Doc, for some reason. "Think we'll run across any

women in this God-forsaken place?"

"I don't believe so. The initial survey showed no sign of any kind of life, even though conditions make it entirely reasonable to expect it. Not every planet has life. We may be the first living beings on this world."

"Hell! Not even a chance to knock off a bird or beastie," Ayers was disgusted.

"Maybe a chance to knock off something else," Goode said darkly.

"How far do you think we ought to go this morning?" Davy asked.

"Not too far," Wilding said. "Merely exploratory. And we want to see how the half-track acts in this jungle. From this we can base a time schedule of some sort."

"Hey!" Ayers suddenly shouted. He kept looking at his rearview mirror. "I think we're being followed."

It wasn't long before Ayers was proved right. And shortly after, Haye, at the wheel of a half-track, came barreling behind them, skidded past on a thirty-degree angle, righted his half-track and ducked in front of them. A moment later he was out of sight.

"Think I ought to chase him?" Ayers asked.

"No!" Davy said sharply. "I don't like the looks of it. Turn around. We're going back."

"What do you really think?" Wilding asked in a low voice after a moment.

"I think troubles coming to meet us real soon now," Davy replied.

He was right.

The other half-track was sitting broadside to them across the path they had made. Two men were standing erect in the car, rifles aimed squarely on Davy's crew. Seconds later the other half-track appeared. Haye, carrying his rifle loosely under one arm, leaped from the carrier and approached.

"Okay. Toss them sidearms out!" he said. There was a wide grin on his bearded lips, but his eyes were cold and calculating.

"Do as he says," Davy said thinly.

Haye jerked his head in a signal and the odd man in each carrier came at a run. They collected the pistols and returned to their carriers. Haye backed off, levelled his rifle and blew a hole into all eight front tires.

"You guys need the walk," Haye said as he started back to his carrier.

Seconds later he had joined the other carrier and they made off in the direction from which they had originally come.

Only Davy and Wilding were silent on the long walk back to their base. The others took turns in cursing and sinking into long sullen spells. The final explosions took place when they came back to the ship, and saw the wrecked transmitter.

Ayers shouted in fury. His anger was so great he was shaking. "If it's the last thing I do I'll have that plug-ugly's heart for this. I'll tear him to bits."

And if Hansen and Goode were less noisy with their anger, they were no less vengeful. Even Davy became infected with their anger.

"If that's the game," he said after a while, "we can play, too. And maybe surprise them, while we're at it. Haye must think we're licked now. Fine. They won't be expecting us, then. We're going to pay a visit to their camp, and see what fun we can have. Are we together?"

Only Wilding held off. "But I'll go along," he said. "Only because I'm curious."

They waited for dark. In the meantime Hansen broke out the repair locker and provided each man with a spanner or wrench. And so armed they set off. The darkness was complete, but Davy and the two older men were old hands at orienting themselves to strange surroundings. They had a sort of sixth sense in getting about in the dark.

Somehow, Wilding became lost.

"Let's go on without him," Goode said. "Hell! He was only going along to see the fun."

Haye's camp was in utter darkness. But it was the silence of the place that bothered Davy. He couldn't quite understand it. Nevertheless he decided to carry out their original plan, which was to attack the first tent they came to. By the time lights were turned on they thought to have knocked out those in the tent, and make the odds more even.

Only when the lights came on to temporarily blind them did Davy realize what had bothered him. It was too late then, but he knew what had been wrong about the absence of sound. Seven men asleep and not one who snored. Incredible.

Davy and the others were blinded for only a few sec-

onds, but it was enough. They had been caught in the open, in a tight group, and the attack did not come hand to hand at first. Wrenches, pliers and spanners came hurtling at them from out of the darkness beyond the lights. Davy saw Hansen catch one across the mouth, then something hard and heavy struck his cheek a glancing blow.

Davy staggered. And a man came charging in from out of the darkness at him. Davy struck out with the wrench he had but it was a weak ineffectual blow and the man ducked it easily, came under the arm and hit Davy in the pit of the stomach. Davy doubled up, felt a crushing weight crash against the back of his head, and knew no more. He sunk into dark and endless oblivion.

He came to his senses slowly. There was a sick feeling at the pit of his stomach. There was a thick coppery taste in his mouth, and the whole right side of his face felt numb. For a second or two the strange movement he was part of made no sense. Then he knew. He was lying on the bed of a half-track. At the same time he became aware that he was not alone. A pair of legs lay across his chest. And someone moaned softly close to his right ear.

Haye had dumped the lot of them into one of the half-tracks and was driving them back to their camp.

A half dozen hand-lights played on the small group on the ground. A man laughed from behind one of the lights. It was easy to identify Haye's laughter.

"I told you guys," Haye said. "I told you not to try anything. Now you got your lumps. Next time I'll play rough. Besides, I got your boy on my side."

It made sense only to Davy. It was hard to talk, with one's face only partly working, but Davy managed, somehow. "Wilding? You're lying." But he knew Haye had been telling the truth. Wilding had made his choice.

"Afraid not," Wilding's voice came from somewhere behind the lights.

And Davy knew something else. It was Wilding who had warned Haye about the coming attack. He hadn't been lost, not for a single second. The years had softened Davy Bradley's temper, had taught him the wisdom of discretion. He knew it was a waste of time to argue, and irritation only to himself to give way to the anger in him. He felt

no pity for himself, or for the others with him. These things happened and it was one of the calculated risks one took. It was rather of Nancy, his wife, he thought at this moment of defeat. For he knew quite well he had been defeated. From the first time he saw the pear-shaped spaceship below their own. It was of Nancy he thought.

His thoughts took wings.

She would be waiting, as she had waited for him in the long years gone by, when he would be gone for six, eight months at a time. Not just with mere patience because she had no choice, but with faith and trust and love. Just as she was now. And though he was defeated at this moment, in her eyes he would never be defeated.

So his lips formed a lopsided smile, and his voice was far more gentle than any could have thought it could be in such circumstances. Wilding felt the something that was like sorrow, and found himself explaining, even though he, too, had had to make his choice and abide by it.

"I'm sorry, old-timer. It wasn't because I hated or even disliked you. But I, also, had to make a decision. The cards had been stacked against you from the first. Travis had been blinded by his ego, and had not planned or prepared well. Haye did. It was just that simple. And here, too, your plans could not succeed. I could not see myself sinking when a raft was lying at my side. I'm sorry . . ."

"But you didn't have to double-cross us, you rotten louse," Ayers shouted. He, too, had regained consciousness.

Poor Ayers, Davy thought. He'd never understand that there were men who could make a free choice of a wrong way. After all, it was so hard to tell what *was* right. And sometimes one never knew, even afterward. He understood very well what had forced Wilding's hand. And for a second Davy wondered if under the same circumstances he, too, would have acted as Wilding . . .

"Haye," Davy called out strongly. "Listen to me!"

"I'm listening."

"I've got a proposition."

"Too late. I'm not interested."

"Better listen; it could be good."

For a second there was silence. Then Haye said, "Shoot."

"I'm an old man," Davy continued. "And it doesn't make a hell of a lot of difference where or when I die. This nowhere place suits me fine that way. The only way you can stop me is kill me. And that isn't in your plans. Too many questions when you get back; too many answers you'll have to give. And maybe, in the end your claim won't be honored . . ."

"Get to the end, old man," Haye said gruffly.

". . . Yuh. Take my boys in, share-and-share alike . . ."

But before Haye could answer a chorus of "nos" from Davy's crew filled the air.

"Shut up!" Davy commanded harshly. "So long as I'm Captain of this ship I'll give the orders. I have my personal reasons for not wanting in, and they have nothing to do with you. But it isn't fair in any way that you men don't share in this good fortune. I tell you now, Garet Travis would never let you even smell what you would find."

"Half-shares," Haye said.

"Full!" Davy said, almost softly. "You forget I get nothing."

"Okay, old man," Haye said. There was respect in his voice. "I like your style. Too bad you're not a couple of years. . . . No matter. You got more guts than any of us, in a way. Full shares it is. Wilding says we can start in the morning. Better get some sleep. You've had a rough night."

It was Wilding who helped Davy Bradley into the tent. And it was Wilding who placed a packing against the cut cheek of the old man, and made him comfortable. As he was turning to leave he said, "She must be a great old gal, this Nancy of yours."

"Just the greatest," Davy said gently.

"And you wouldn't want to hurt her for all the money in all the Universes."

Davy only smiled.

Wilding continued: "It's a pity you didn't land here on that trip you took to Mercury."

"What do you mean?"

"You landed on the biggest hunk of coal I've ever seen. There must be a hundred miles of it . . ."

There were only a few reporters left when Davy and his crew stepped out into the huge terminal waiting room. Haye's ship had come in two hours earlier, at eight, and the excitement had been feverish then when the news came out of the discovery they had made.

"Tough luck, Captain," one of the reporters remarked.

"Can't always be good," Davy said. He fingered the healing scar on his cheek.

"Going back?" another asked.

"Nope. This is my last trip anywhere."

"But you didn't get what you went after. I thought all you old space shooters never gave up."

"Well," Davy said judiciously, "I can't say we didn't get anything. Of course my crew share in Haye's discovery. And I laid claim to something . . ."

"Yeah. What, Captain?"

"Biggest bituminous property ever found. Garet Travis' Mercury mines can stay closed. He's got the biggest coal mine of all time, now. That is, if you want to take Anton Wilding's word for it."

"Like the image of the truth," said another of the newsmen. "But it's not as good as pluritile . . ."

Davy shrugged. "I said luck can't always be good. Depends, too, on what you mean by luck."

Nancy Bradley paled at sight of the disfiguring scar. She took him by the hand and led him to the comfort chair and pushed him into it, and made herself at ease on one arm of the chair. She kissed him gently and brushed finger tips against the ugly scar. It was the only thing she feared, from the start to the end of all his voyages, the physical signs of disaster.

"How are you, Davy?" she asked softly.

"Tired, my dear, tired. And Garet Travis was no rest cure for me, either. I went directly to him after we landed. Knew it wouldn't take long. He fired me."

"I don't care!" she said, pressing her lips together firmly in anger. "I never liked the man anyway, and hated for you to work for him."

"Won't have to anymore. He even thought I was a fool not to share in Haye's offer. But I'll tell you about that later. First, about ten hours sleep would do me right."

She brought him breakfast in the morning. But it was the morning paper he wanted. She got it for him. "Nancy," he said, not looking at her, "turn to the financial section."

She gave him a quick look, then turned the pages quickly. "Listen," her breath was quick in excitement. She read aloud: " 'The new discovery Captain Davy Bradley made,

and verified by none other than Anton Wilding, shook Travis Mines out of the doldrums and skyrocketed the stock to a new all-time high . . .' "

"What's the quotation?" Davy asked. And before she could answer, added: "I figured Travis was just blowing wind. Maybe it wasn't pluritile but he could make a pretty penny on bituminous."

"Eight-eight!" she whispered. "It's eighty-eight. Why it never was higher than twenty all the time we had it."

Davy pulled his wife close and kissed her gently.

"This time I'm a real stockholder," he said. "Two whole per-cent worth. There'll be real dividends for Davy now . . ."

THE END

"All I know is she passed the government security check."

BY THE READERS

Dear Editor:

I didn't like anything in the October *Fantastic*. I didn't care for the cover; everyone's been telling me how good all the stories were, but I just didn't like it.

Excuse me. I did enjoy "The Moon Stealers." Maybe it was because the idea was kind of novel, or maybe it was because it was by E. K. Jarvis.

It seems in my last letter I slammed Harlan Ellison's "Cave of Miracles." Sorry, Harlan, it was a good yarn.

Don Kent
3800 Wellington
Chicago, Ill.

• *You're forgiven, Don. Don't exactly know what we're forgiving you for, but you're forgiven. Harlan forgives you, too.*

Dear Editor:

Your August cover was excellent in my opinion. Emotional impact has been a seldom thing these last fifteen years in magazine covers. This one has it.

To contemplate three young ladies staked out in a desert, near enough to each other to communicate by shouting, yet too far apart to be of help or solace to one another, and waiting for that proverbial "unknown fate"—well, anyway, I think that hairy creature in the foreground could have been omitted.

The look on the face of the nearest girl is enough to fully tell the story.

E. Thomson
Box 723
Berkeley, Calif.

• *Those gals sure were in trouble, weren't they? And confidentially, they aren't out of it yet.*

Dear Ed:

An excellent September issue. Enjoyed all the stories and can't decide which was the best. Each one served the reader the fullest measure of fantasy for which we are looking as a so-called escape from our everyday problems.

W. C. Brandt
Apt. N.
1725 Seminary Ave.
Oakland, Calif.

• *W. C. is in and all's right with the world.*

Dear Editor:

I am a fairly new reader of *Fantastic* and did not begin reading it until after it became digest size. Recently I obtained some old pulp issues and I have found them to be much better than the present books.

The stories and covers on *Fantastic* aren't as good as they used to be, however, once in a coon's age you get a good story. The covers might be improved if Valigursky had more drawing space, although I think Finlay could do a much better job.

The day you changed to digest size was the day you played a dirty trick on fandom. You raised the price 10¢ and cut the size of the magazine in half and therefore shortened the stories. You had to drop all those invaluable articles and advertisements and your letter column is nothing compared to what it used to be.

Instead of going back to pulp size, why not double the number of pages your magazine has now? I'm sure this will please everyone. If you doubled the number of pages you would have just as much or more room than you had in the pulp issues. You could run complete novels in each issue and have plenty of room left for novelettes and shorts as well as all the features. "It Sounds Fantastic But" is a sick attempt at summing

all of those numerous one and two page articles you used to run into one page. Perhaps you think you cannot meet the monthly deadline or afford to print such a magazine for only 35¢ although one or two other magazines are doing it. If you printed a magazine with twice as many pages as the one you print now none of your fans would mind paying or waiting a little more for it.

Why not take a vote on this? Let the fans make the decision. After all, your fans are the most important persons connected with the magazine.

Danny Pritchett
228 West Bridgeport St.
White Hall, Illinois

• *To quote you, Danny: "Perhaps you think you cannot . . . print such a magazine for only 35¢ . . ." We don't just think—we know blamed well we can't. As to the other mags that are doing it—please name one, old chap.*

Dear Editor:

In regard to your question in this month's *Fantastic,* I have found an answer in a similar problem. If an arrow or bullet were shot straight up would it stop before turning and going down? The answer, as I remember it, was that an object must stop before changing direction. Assuming that the same law of physics holds true in this situation I would be inclined to say that the piston must stop momentarily at the top of the cylinder.

Although my answer may be wrong I would like to tell you that I think *Fantastic* is the best s-f magazine on the market.

Fred Honhisalo
217 off Hill St.
E. Weymouth, Mass.

• *As you've no doubt discovered from the November issue, your answer is wrong, Mr. Honhisalo. We were fooled, too.*

Dear Ed:

My compliments on your August issue. It has what I consider a proper balance between the light type story and the heavy type.

Congratulations on your answer to the gentlemen who seemed so preoccupied with sex. My own opinion on this sub-

ject is sex that is handled with good taste and that is an integral part of an entertaining and enjoyable story is in no way objectionable.

John P. Garrett, Jr.
207 Steward Street
Greenville, S. C.

Dear Editor:

I liked the whole idea of "A Cave Of Miracles." I haven't ever read a more entertaining story since last issue's "A Pattern For Monsters." It seems like they're getting better. Hurray for "A Home Among the Stars," E. K. Jarvis' best short yet.

James W. Ayers
609 First Street
Attalla, Alabama

• *Better and better and better. That's the motto pasted on our bulletin board.*

Dear Editor:

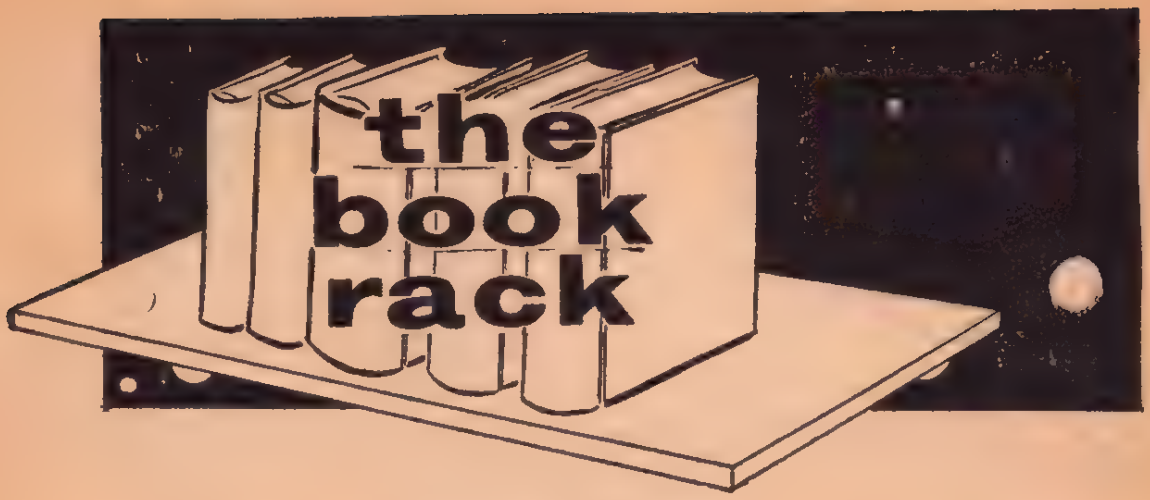
Just finished reading the October *Fantastic*. All the stories in my opinion, were good. *Fantastic* is getting to be better with each succeeding issue. *Amazing*, I'm sorry to say, seems to be going in the opposite direction. Don't let one suffer because of the other. How about publishing two good s-f magazines?

I admit though that I like the idea of cartoons in your s-f magazines. Can you put more in each issue?

I'm glad to hear that you have some Virgil Finlay covers coming up. In my estimation he's one of the best illustrators. Who is this Ramon who illustrated "The Ugly Beauty"?

Peter Francis Skeberdis
606 Crapo
Flint 3, Michigan

• *We're cramming in every cartoon the pages'll possibly hold and wracking our brains to make room for more. May figure out a way, soon. Ramon is—well, he is Ramon. A very nice fellow and a real hot artist.*



BY S. E. COTTS

FANTASTIC MEMORIES. *By Maurice Sandoz. 146 pp. Doubleday and Company. $2.00.*

This is a fascinating and unusual collection of stories written by a scientist and man of letters. It is a reissue of a 1944 publication with two new stories added. These tales belong more to the realm of the fantastic and the supernatural than they do to that of science fiction. But even this does not describe them so accurately. The incidents here are not overwhelmingly unbelievable or macabre; in fact when one strips them down to the bare essentials of plot, they are incredibly thin. But the artistry of the writing, the faithful depiction of mood, the beauty and delicacy of the language and the haunting and evocative atmosphere (all of which have survived a translation from the French) can render even the simplest sketch a memorable reading experience.

As I mentioned before, these cannot be called science fiction stories in the true sense of the word. Yet I would recommend them very highly to all S-F fans and writers as an example of how to create a mood with almost no props and the greatest economy of means, instead of always relying on bug-eyed monsters and such to do the job.

EARTH SATELLITES AND THE RACE FOR SPACE SUPERIORITY. *By G. Harry Stine. 191 pp. Ace Books. Paper: 35¢.*

G. Harry Stine, a rocket engineer at the White Sands Proving Grounds, has written this factual book in a clear and interesting way. He discusses the progressive steps taken in the building and testing of various kinds of rockets and then goes on to conjecture

about the projected launching of an earth satellite. All this gives him a stamping ground for airing his views on the question of space superiority and the place of technology in securing this superiority.

When he discusses factual material (accompanied by drawings), he is always authoritative. Furthermore he leaves the pride of the lay reader intact by writing in a manner that is not obviously elementary. Also included are several excellent imaginative sections such as his description of what the procedures might be in a commercial rocket flight from New York to Los Angeles. Mr. Stine had me so engrossed that I found myself joining his imaginary captain in counting the seconds before blastoff.

Only when the author starts airing his views does this reviewer become unhappy. Mr. Stine places so much emphasis on the urgent race to be first, to be superior, to conquer space before the Russians that he leaves the impression he does not seriously have faith in the possibility of cooperation for an international solution to the problems of space. This does not alter the fact that this is a convincing, much-needed book. I only hope that those who read it do not fall under the sway of Mr. Stine's views as easily as they fall under the sway of his excellent factual writing.

HIDDEN WORLD. *By Stanton A. Coblentz. 224 pp. Avalon Books. $2.75.*

This is a novel of two hidden civilizations, the neighboring lands of Wu and Zu, located far beneath a silver mine in Nevada. Frank Comstock and Philip Clay, mining engineers, stumble on them accidentally following a mine cave. These nations, in possession of scientific knowledge far in advance of our own (except that they do not have nuclear power), are deadly enemies engaged in perpetual warfare. The effort of the two friends to wend their way through the inverted logic of the customs in this land of chalk-faced people and to escape up the ventilation system back to the U. S. furnishes plenty of adventure, much of it quite humorous, to keep up the pace of the novel.

This situation provides the author with the departure point for a satire which the book jacket compares with *Gulliver's Travels.* To my mind *Hidden World* certainly comes off second best. In a large section of the *Travels* Gulliver realizes that he comes from an inferior civilization through the skillful questioning of his hosts, an intelligent and highly ethical race of horses. There is nothing like this in *Hidden World* where the hosts are made so ridiculous that they never seem credible. This aspect seems to me to make *Hidden World* more comparable to *Alice in Wonderland.* If Mr. Coblentz wants to be believed he should stop using the blunt side of his ax on his readers.

Boost Your I. Q.

A friend of ours looked this quiz over and was quite surprised. He thought Diesel was a motor and Pasteur was a place to keep cows when they weren't being milked. We knew better than that, of course, but still we flunked badly when we tried to write in the first names of these greats. If you can get 15 you'll do very well indeed. Identify 20 and you're a charter member of the Name Dropper's Club. *(Answers on page 129)*

---

1. M_____ FARADAY
2. L_____ PASTEUR
3. N_____ TESLA
4. V_____ BUSH
5. C_____ KETTERING
6. G_____ WESTINGHOUSE
7. G_____ MARCONI
8. A_____ EINSTEIN
9. P_____ CURIE
10. G_____ FAHRENHEIT
11. W_____ ROENTGEN
12. E_____ FERMI
13. A_____ VOLTA
14. C_____ HUYGENS
15. A_____ PICCARD
16. L_____ BURBANK
17. H_____ UREY
18. J_____ WATT
19. R_____ DIESEL
20. A_____ AMPERE

SCIENTIFIC MYSTERIES

By LEIGH MARLOWE

THE INVISIBLE HORROR

With the first dozen years of the Atomic Age safely tucked away into history, mankind is congratulating himself on his ever-increasing control over the forces of nature and talking confidently of the atomic millennium of plenty just around the corner. But what—for some unfathomable reason—mankind doesn't want to talk about at all is the awesome danger of the Atomic Age, not the danger of all-out thermonuclear warfare but a hidden danger — an invisible death which may be killing you slowly even while you read these words!

Item. There's a general movement afoot to tone down talk about atomic weapons, about superbombs that blast whole cities to eternity, about atomic warheads and ICBM's. The emphasis today is on peacetime uses of atomic energy. They don't even talk about atomic weapons on the lecture tour at the Oak Ridge Museum these days. But—no private insurance company is willing to underwrite an atomic power plant, or any mass peacetime industrial atomic application. The plain fact is, they're afraid to.

Item. The Thermonuclear explosions toss radioactive hot stuff into the stratosphere where it lodges for years, slowly drifting around the earth. Thermonuclear explosions also raise the radioactive level of the seas. But the same effects can be produced without bombs, with the so-called peaceful applications of atomic energy, which necessitate the dumping of waste materials—radioactive by-products of industrial processes. So, if the level is raised above the danger point, you can get your deadly roentgens with your fish dinner, with your drinking water if you happen to get it from a river on which there's a nuclear power plant upstream. And the cocktail may give your great grandchildren an incurable hangover.

Item. Direct exposure to radiation has well-known results: skin

burns and vomiting, followed by anemia, internal bleeding, eating away of the digestive tract and ending with cancer and leukemia. It's a known fact that radiologists have shorter life spans than other physicians. A number of uranium miners have contracted lung cancer from the inhalation of radon gas, and workers in laboratories dealing in high voltage machines get tremendous doses of radiation.

Item. The Committee on meteorology calculates that in less than fifty years, nuclear reactors on earth will contain so much of a radioactive isotope of strontium — an isotope that causes cancer—that if one percent of it were dispersed it could seriously contaminate the whole planet.

All this is not something in the distant future—it is building up day by day and year by year. Let's say that a person is exposed to radiation with no apparent ill effects—the kind of radiation you get in the doctor's office from a fluoroscope, or when you have your teeth X-rayed—that's about three or four roentgens over a thirty year period, and the Committee on Genetic Effects lists 10 roentgens as the maximal safe limit for the same period. These X-rays have the same effects as deadly gamma radiation and the figure of three or four roentgens does not include so-called therapeutic X-ray treatment. The Committee's limit is kid stuff to the AEC, in whose labs a dosage of 15.6 roentgens is permitted per year. The Committee's only answer to that piece of intelligence is that high radiation lab work should be done by people who don't expect to have any more children.

The reason for this is simple: while the radiation may not show its effect on the parent, radiation increases the spontaneous rate of mutation in genes, the agents of heredity. An individual's genes are passed on to his offspring and the effects are cumulative. Thus, after a number of generations, the human race could produce more defectives who will be burdens to themselves and to society, genetic monsters, chronically and congenitally ill. Further, irradiated germ plasm, over a period of time, results in a rising death rate and a falling birth rate, which, if kept up long enough, brings about population decline that could ultimately result in the end of the human race.

Of course, it's true that genes mutate spontaneously. But a not very large increase in the amount of radiation we're receiving right now—from natural sources such as cosmic rays, as well as man-made sources—can double the mutation rate because, in the language of the geneticists, mutations are induced at a rate in proportion to the amount of radiation received —and this does not have anything to do with the period of time over which the radiation oc-

curs. In other words, far from building up an immunity to radiation poisoning, your body and your germ plasm permanently store the deadly roentgens everytime they strike.

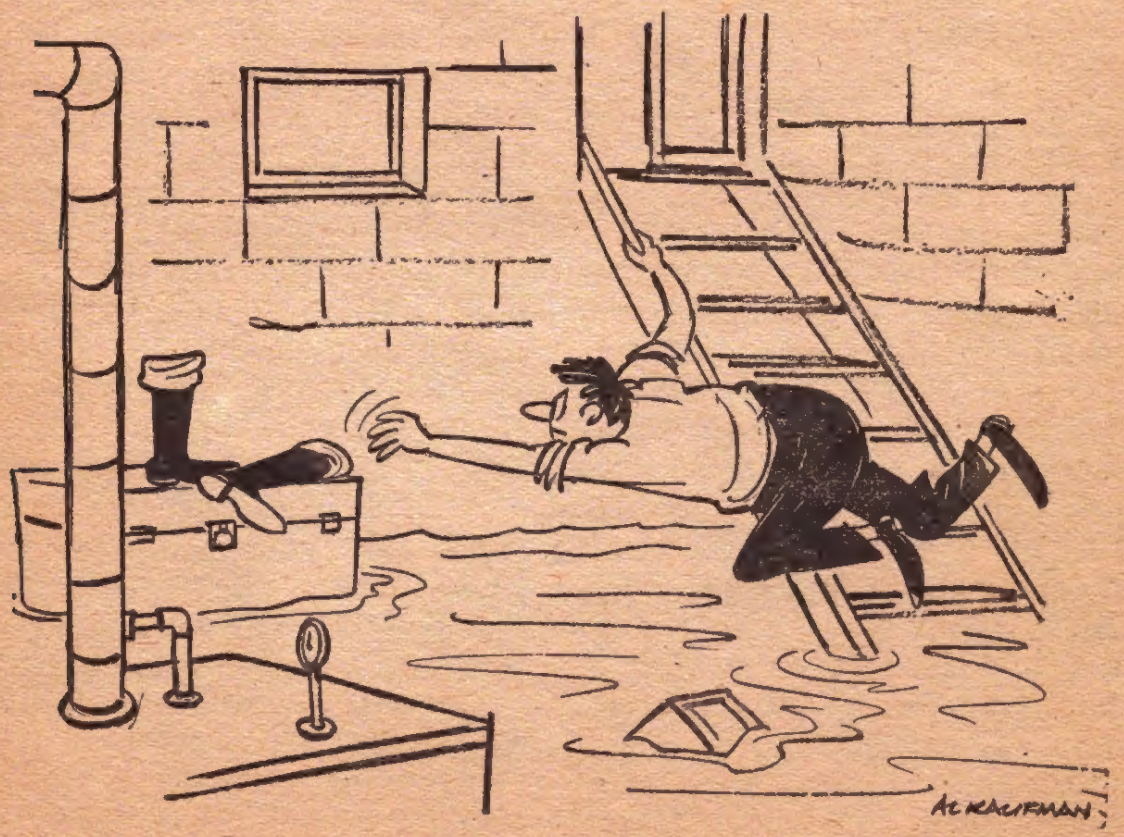
If we were lower animals, there might be more hope for us since through natural selection, or survival of the fittest, the poorer specimens are under pressure from their healthier brothers and are eliminated. We don't believe in non-therapeutic sterilization, where an individual is prevented from transmitting his defective germ plasm. In addition, since larger doses of radiation can be tolerated over longer periods of time, heavily irradiated survivors can increase the stockpile of defective genes with which the race is fast becoming burdened.

The Atomic Age is creating a world-wide health hazard that no amount of disarmament is going to solve, and solve it we must before we eat, breathe, heal and love ourselves calmly to death.

THE END

ANSWERS TO BOOST YOUR I.Q.

1. Michael; 2. Louis; 3. Nikola; 4. Vannevar; 5. Charles; 6. George; 7. Guglielmo; 8. Albert; 9. Pierre; 10. Gabriel; 11. Wilhelm; 12. Enrico; 13. Alessandro; 14. Christian; 15. Auguste; 16. Luther; 17. Harold; 18. James; 19. Rudolf; 20. Andre.



It Sounds Fantastic, But . . .

Oddities Of Ornithology

The Everglade Kite of Florida feeds entirely upon a certain genus of freshwater snail. It is in danger of becoming extinct due to inability to find enough snails upon which to feed.

The Elf Owl, found in the desert country of the southwestern United States, is no larger than an English sparrow and nests in old woodpecker holes in cactus plants.

Found on four continents, the Black-billed Magpie is one of the most widely-distributed of bird species. But the Yellow-billed Magpie is found in only a limited area in the State of California.

The California woodpecker rivals the squirrel as a hoarder of acorns. Making a hole in the bark of a tree it inserts a nut and a record number of 50,000 have been counted in one tree!

The Crested Flycatcher has the peculiar habit of using old snakeskins as part of its nesting material. The reason for this has never been satisfactorily determined.

Those great insect eaters, the birds, are themselves often at the mercy of insect pests. Many of our cavity-nesting species are often obliged to leave their nest with young to the mercy of the insects. A wren once built its nest with sticks to which spider egg sacs were attached and when they hatched they ate the young birds alive.

Only thirty of the fossilized eggs of the extinct Elephant bird of Madagascar are known to exist. It is estimated that, when fresh, each egg weighed seventeen pounds and contained thirteen quarts of liquid.

The Huia of New Zealand (now believed extinct) is the only bird known to science in which the sexes have a different-shaped bill. The straight bill of the male was used to chisel into rotten logs to uncover grubs while the slender, curved bill of the female was used to extract them.

Many birds nest on the ground but the Burrowing Owl of the North American plains is one of the few birds that nest in it, usually in an abandoned rodent burrow.

R. S. CRAGGS

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continued from Back Cover

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4. Distance to the Moon is about: 93,000,000 miles — 238,000 miles — 9,000 miles.
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